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MAY AND HER FRIENDS.

'The prettiest thing I've ever seen.'—P. 3.

Front.

MAY

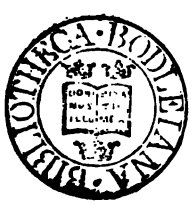
AND

HER FRIENDS.

BY

E. M. B.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY F. W. LAWSON.



'He that walketh uprightly walketh surely.'

Prov. x. 9.

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PREFACE.

IT has been long thought by the Authoress of the present volume, that the copious stream of fiction which is being continually issued from the press does not include in sufficient proportion a class of books especially designed for the beneficial amusement of girls; and the following tale, based upon actual-life incidents, is offered as a contribution towards supplying the deficiency.

The tone and style of thought of the reading multitude is, in a very great degree, influenced for good or for evil by the publications that are perused; and therefore, while producing it, the writer has kept in mind her conviction that those who write for the amusement or instruction of others, and especially those whose literary productions are intended for young people, take upon themselves a serious responsibility.

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MAY AND HER FRIENDS.

CHAPTER I.

'Go with me;
I'll give thee fairies to attend on thee,
And they shall fetch thee jewels from the deep,
And sing, while thou on pressèd flowers dost sleep.'

BRAVO, young Hercules!' exclaimed Sir Lionel Shelley, as, on a cold, bleak January evening, he was ushered into the family apartment of some distant relatives, who resided in the north of England. 'My word! I shall pity the poor partridges ten years hence!'

This remark was addressed to a boy of about nine years of age, who, after scanning the visitor for a moment with child-like but inquiring scrutiny, laid down a gun he had for some minutes previously been perseveringly trying to shoulder, and, taking up a book, retired to a window-seat, as if wishing to avoid further notice.

'And how are my good cousins?' continued the gentleman, crossing the apartment to where a lady with a baby on her knee, formed the most striking figure of a picturesque group.

A sweet smile of welcome was Mrs. Bosanquet's reply, while her husband rose in surprised haste, to greet his unexpected

guest, upon whose entrance a little girl, disturbed in her after-dinner romp, half hid herself behind her mother's chair, and with coquettish *espièglerie* revealed enough of her winsome face to invite a continuation of the play that had been unexpectedly brought to a close.

Sir Lionel looked around him with evident satisfaction, and after exchanging some old-fashioned courtesies with Mrs. Bosanquet, said, 'The very sight of such a nest as this sets my frozen blood circulating;' but by drawing his chair close to the fire, he showed that some other sense than that of sight was not unwilling to be gratified.

'Camilla is not worse?' asked Mr. Bosanquet, in a voice betokening apprehension.

'Much the same — much the same,' was the musing reply. 'She seems to possess some counter-charm against life's ills. I should like to get at her talisman for content! I see how it is,' he further remarked: 'you think I should account for my intrusion here this evening.'

Without giving his host time to disown any such inhospitable curiosity, the visitor went on to explain, that the discovery of coal-fields on his estate had been the unusual cause of his leaving home during that inclement season; and that Camilla had extorted from him a promise that he would take a bed at 'The Old Park House,' and so get possession of all family news; in short, he had come to 'act as a sort of a spy on what was going on.' He laughed and talked very fast, and the little girl already introduced, finding that the conversation was becoming engrossing, and not inheriting her aunt's taste for 'family news,' emerged from her hiding-place, crept stealthily up to her father, and abstracted a handkerchief from his pocket, with which she invited a game at hide with Sir Lionel.

Delighted at this voluntary sociability, the elderly gentleman, quite at sea as to the orthodox way of amusing children, entered into the pastime with extravagant drollery, and so excited the little maiden as to cause Mrs. Bosanquet's apprehension, lest she should laugh more than was good for her. The child's joyous humour was just at its height when nurse came to announce 'Miss May's bed-time!' and the cheery aspect of the softly lighted chamber being much more to her taste than the cold and shadowy outside, she clung so tenaciously to Sir Lionel, to save her from being carried off by 'force of arms,' that Mrs. Bosanquet had to promise that she would come and look at her after she was in bed; but it was not until Sir Lionel said that he too would have a peep at her with her nightcap on, that she could be reconciled to the parting; but this satisfied her, and she nodded a friendly farewell until the closing of the door shut her off from view.

Sir Lionel was fascinated, and so entirely was his bachelor theory, that children were necessarily troublesome, subverted, that when Mrs. Bosanquet, who was rigorous in the performance of promises, and would never let any considerations of ceremony interfere with their fulfilment, rose to visit the nursery, he readily accepted an invitation to accompany her. As she led the way up stairs, laughing at her guest's finding himself in so unusual a territory, his speculations turned upon the question as to which was the most charming of the two, mother or child; but another sight of May seemed to bring him to a decision; for, as he looked at her little graceful form, her face flushed and lovely as only sleeping children's are, he exclaimed with unaffected earnestness, 'My word! it is the prettiest thing I 've ever seen in my life.'

Meanwhile Reginald, the little fellow first addressed, took

advantage of their absence from the room to refer to his father for a solution of the puzzle, as to what Hercules had to do with partridge shooting; but on being informed that Sir Lionel's allusion referred rather to the general strength than to any particular exploit of that hero, and on Mr. Bosanquet's adding, laughingly, that it was possible the birds Hercules is reputed first to have frightened with his rattle and afterwards to have shot with his bow and arrow *might* have been partridges, the boy's spirit of inquiry seemed satisfied, and he announced his readiness to follow where May had led.

Sir Lionel returned to the room looking very animated. The circumstances in which he found himself were unlike anything he was in the habit of witnessing at home, for his mother, who with Camilla, a sister of Mr. Bosanquet's, formed part of his permanent household, was a very ancient and stately dame, His evening's experience was as pleasant to him as it was novel, and finding himself with only the elder members of the family, he became very chatty and communicative—matters on various subjects were freely discussed, and the bell rang for prayer before he was aware that the evening hours were so nearly at their close.

When he retired for the night his thoughts recurred to the pleasant scenes of which he had been a spectator, and he fell asleep indulging in a vision of Scotswood peopled by such little cherubs as May Bosanquet.

The next morning found him paying an early visit to the nursery, which his little friend was ready to quit. Eager to renew his acquaintance, she accepted his proffered hand with winning confidence, and trotted away in a highly satisfied frame of mind, looking triumphantly at her nurse, whom she evidently thought likely to object to such a subversion of rules, the pit-a-pat of her little feet sounding very musical to the unaccustomed

ears of Sir Lionel as she descended with him to the breakfast-room. Soon afterwards he made an expedition with her to the toy-shop in the town. The morning's proceedings were repeated for several days, until there was such an accession of playthings in nurse's territory, that she said, in her Scotch tongue, she should be 'up to her knees in 'em.'

As on the first evening of his arrival Sir Lionel had represented his visit even for one night as requiring an unusual effort, Mr. Bosanquet was at a loss to account for his lengthened stay; especially as he seemed uneasy, and grew more and more so each day, although he showed no intention of leaving. At last, concluding that business must be detaining him against his will, he asked if there were anything that he could do for him on his return home.

This offer opened the way for a proposition little expected by Mr. Bosanquet, but one upon the answer to which the content of his guest weightily depended. Sir Lionel at once replied to the effect that it was no business matter that was detaining him—that gold and silver were not among his wants—that his nest was already deeply feathered; but that he wanted a little bird to lie in it. He spoke long and continuously, as if wishing to set forth all the advantages incident upon the acceptance of the offer he was about to make, before subjecting himself to a refusal, and wound up by expressing his wish to adopt little May, and to make her his heiress.

A quick expression of pain no less than of astonishment passed over the father's face; but the prospect of an ample provision for his daughter was a great allurement to him, and he hesitated in his reply. As a cadet of a younger branch of his family, his patrimony had been small, and having married in very early life, he had known something of pecuniary anxiety.

The lady on whom he bestowed his affection happened to be a ward in Chancery, and he had the audacity to elope with her while she was yet a minor. The Lord Chancellor did not allow the affront to his guardianship to pass unresented, but imprisoned the heiress-stealer for contempt of court, and withheld the wife's very moderate fortune as long as the law could allow.

During the early years of married life, Mr. Bosanquet lost caste in the rich and fashionable circles to which he by right of birth belonged, and proved the truth of the proverb that 'the poor is separated from his neighbour;' but in spite of his compulsory retirement from the world, he was a happy man, and for many years ere this story commences had learned to live contentedly on his income. At the time of Sir Lionel's visit there was one great cause of family anxiety—his own confirmed ill health. A few days previously his physicians had given it as their opinion that if he could spend his winters in Madeira, his life might be considerably prolonged; and although he had then treated the proposition as impracticable on the score of expense, a home in England for May would lighten the difficulty; and as he stood listening to what Sir Lionel had to say, these thoughts passed through his mind. He promised to confer on the subject with Mrs. Bosanquet; and, improbable as it may appear, the result of the conference was that May was given up to the care of an easy, characterless man of the world, the arrangement being that in the autumn of that year, subsequent to Sir Lionel's annual visit abroad, she should be introduced into her new home.

'Scotswood Warren' was situate just above the brow of a chalk hill in one of the most beautiful of our English counties, and from any part of the estate so called a gazer might take in one of the loveliest of lovely landscapes, combining at once the

grand, the wild, and the sylvan. It formed part of an extensive tract of waste land that had been enclosed under the authority of an Act of Parliament, and derived its name from that by which the surrounding neighbourhood had been known from time immemorial. Enclosures of other large portions of the district were afterwards made; but they all had other names assigned them, and the house and grounds of Sir Lionel Shelley were called, *par excellence*, 'The Warren.' The mansion was visible for many miles around, being conspicuous not only by reason of its elevated site, but for its extensive frontage of only one storey in height. It had two wings, to each of which extensive conservatories and aviaries were attached.

The grounds were laid out with artistic taste, from the rich mosaic of flower-beds that sloped from the terrace, to the clusters of graceful shrubs planted near the house as a relief to the intensity of the light. There were two spots in them which were especially inviting: one, 'The Hollow,' literally a hollow, with a few tall trees, a rich undergrowth of tangle, and such wild flowers as can live happily in the shade; the other, 'The Wood,' a thick plantation of box trees, with here and there an opening where the ground was covered with soft mossy grass of a lovely green—a place in which Puck might be supposed to receive his friends, and follow them 'about and around through bog, and bush, and brake, and brier.'

Such is a brief sketch of the home at which little May arrived, in company with her nurse and Sir Lionel, on a lovely September evening of the year in which this story begins.

When they reached the lodge, the gate was opened by a tottering old woman, who emerged from a pretty moss and rose-covered porch. This picturesque figure was known as Bettie Froggatt; her body was bent almost double, and her nose and

chin were in close proximity. Her dress consisted of a mob-cap bound with black and kept in its place by a chinnum, a short linsey gown, the body of which was crossed by a yellow kerchief, a check apron, white gaiters, and wooden shoes. Sir Lionel considered her an ornamental appendage to his grounds, and accorded her some distinction in consequence, always making it a rule to exchange a few good-natured words with her whenever opportunity offered.

'How now, dame?' he inquired, as she stood fumbling at the gate. 'Asleep, were you, in spite of the rheumatism? Have you managed to frighten away the foxes? Eh? How get on the young turkeys?'

Not one of these questions being heard, they were, as a matter of course, unanswered; and the old dame, concluding Sir Lionel's harangue to have consisted of a detailed inquiry after her health, began to unfold to view some hot tiles she had wound round her arm as a cure for rheumatism; when the coachman, not thinking it necessary to await the completion of the ceremony, drove quickly on, only leaving time for a good-natured nod from her master. The noise of the voices and the sudden halt awoke little May from a long slumber, and Sir Lionel lifted her up to the carriage window, to take in her first view of Scotswood.

It was an evening to be remembered, earth and sky combining to form one of Nature's loveliest pictures, but it was difficult to decide as to its effect upon May, for she only gave a deep sigh, such as often escapes from a little burdened heart in novel or exciting circumstances, and then relapsed into the slumber that had been abruptly disturbed.

The travellers were met in the hall by Mrs. Shelley and Miss Bosanquet: the former an erect, spare, stately lady, with a high

nose and piercing dark eyes; the latter a delicate, gentle-looking creature, evidently a sufferer from some wasting illness.

Both looked pleased to welcome the little girl, although their welcome was characteristically different; Mrs. Shelley proposing that she should have some supper and go to bed at once, 'in order that dinner might not longer be kept waiting;' while Miss Bosanquet, thinking only of the delight of having possession of her brother's child, tried to carry her away, when finding her strength insufficient, she placed her in her nurse's arms, and followed with her from the room.

Sir Lionel called out that May was to come down to dinner; and accordingly, after the necessary time given to her toilet, in a room suggestive of one in a fairy palace, little May found herself seated at table in a dazzling light, very bewildering to her sleepy senses,—a position rather entertaining for its novelty than its agreeableness.

Mrs. Shelley was manifestly displeased at seeing her there, and, after putting on her spectacles and closely scrutinizing her, said reproachfully to Sir Lionel, 'I suppose it's *your* folly having her brought here?

May opened her eyes wide, and confronted the old lady with looks of doubtful inquiry, as if to decide whether she were her friend, and in her fit of abstraction upset one of the many perplexing appurtenances that were put in her way; whereupon Mrs. Shelley started so frantically as to cause the blood to rush over the face, arms, and neck of the involuntary author of the mischief. Seeing the frightened look on the poor child's face, Sir Lionel went to her aid, saying, 'She has more wine-glasses than she knows what to do with, so thinks it as well to dispose of a few. *She* knows how to manage matters, and to eat her dinner too, I can tell you.'

May restrained her rising tears with commendable self-control, a little hysterical sob being the only indication of unusual emotion, and proceeded to perform the duties of the table in a way to justify Sir Lionel's opinion as to her capabilities, until Miss Bosanquet, alarmed at the probable effect of the esculent varieties of which she was partaking, told her to say 'Good night,' and that nurse should come and take her to bed.

'She 's not going to bed yet, certainly not,' said Sir Lionel, decidedly.

'Tertainly not,' echoed the child; at which sign of appreciation Sir Lionel was of course delighted; while Mrs. Shelley—wondering whether all intervention in the management of the child was to be disallowed, and whether this treatment of her was to be a precedent for future occasions—looked very severe, and gave her son, who had always been in the habit of deferring to her opinion in cases where his dilettanteism was not concerned, the uncomfortable feeling that he was setting her will at defiance. He was soon glad to make a move, and, without waiting for dessert, caught up a Brobdignagian bunch of grapes, and, giving them to May, carried her off to the drawing-room.

The accumulation of all sorts of knicknackeries, useless and expensive, had been hitherto Sir Lionel's hobby, and the style of furniture and ornaments in the Scotswood drawing-room were such as might be found in the houses of the old French *noblesse*. For many years he had returned from abroad, laden with what Mrs. Shelley, in the strong language more in vogue in the last generation than the present, was pleased to call his foreign gimcracks; and so full was the house that it frequently happened that a choice marble or bronze could find a no more suitable standing-place than a shelf in a lumber-room or an outhouse.

Now he seemed about to find a new interest; for, after placing May in a fanciful seat he had had covered for her with a leopard-skin, he proceeded to set in motion various mechanical toys collected for her amusement, showing an amount of energy such as the ladies had never before seen him display.

Figures were set to dance to the tune of a musical-box; babies cried 'Mamma;' cats swallowed mice wholesale, and birds sang; until May, quite bewildered with the multiplicity of novelties, turned for relief to a more familiar pastime, and began to play with a kitten that had crept into the room, and was then having a chase after her tail.

'Do you think to supply the child with toys at this rate?' asked Mrs. Shelley, in a somewhat gruff and satirical tone of voice. 'When one sees what is considered necessary for the amusement of the rising generation, it makes the elders wonder how they managed to get through their own childhood. I should have said these might be distributed over twelve months at least.'

'Would it not be better to reserve some of them for especial occasions?' suggested Miss Bosanquet. 'When they seldom come they wished-for come,' she added, conciliating Sir Lionel by quoting his favourite author.

Here every one was attracted by the noise of a cock-crowing and a flapping of wings; and, on discovering that it came from a French clock that stood in the corner of the room, May fairly screamed with delight.

Pleased at her pleasure, Sir Lionel laboured (as people unaccustomed to children so often do labour) to describe mechanism quite beyond the child's comprehension; but May was sufficiently amused with watching effects without troubling herself as to the cause. The jewelled bird was very attractive; then

there were figures of two boys, one of which turned an hour-glass, while the other put forth a rod; and as at the last stroke nurse made her appearance, she was quite satiated with delight, and glad to lay her head on nurse's shoulder on her way up to bed.

CHAPTER II.

'I learnt the royal genealogies
Of Oviedo; the internal laws
Of the Burmese empire; by how many feet
Mount Chimborazo outsoars Teneriffe;
What navigable river joins itself
To Tara; and what census of the year five
Was taken at Klagenfurt, because she liked
A general insight into *useful facts*.'

FROM the time that May took up her abode at Scotswood, she saw little of the pleasant home party at the Old Park House. During several years that followed, Mr. and Mrs. Bosanquet spent a great part of their time abroad; their youngest child died soon after their leaving England, and Reginald was going through a course of study, first at school, and then at college; so that *home* at the Old Park House was a thing of the past.

When a request was made for May to visit her parents, Sir Lionel seemed to chafe at the thought of any rival influence, and manifested such evident repugnance to concur in the proposition, that invitations were less and less frequent, until at last it became understood that she was not to leave Scotswood. Reginald never received an invitation to see her; so that, except for a passing interview with Mr. and Mrs. Bosanquet,

which only took place at rare intervals, she was entirely alienated from all kith and kin standing nearer to her in relationship than her aunt or Sir Lionel.

It was evident that the old man intended as much as possible to concentrate the child's affections on himself; and if indulgence and lavish gifts could have purchased love, he would have been eminently successful; but he might have discovered that a little judiciously exercised moral influence on the part of her aunt did more to win May's real affection than all the treasures he was ready to lay at her feet.

During her early years, she was decidedly a favourite of fortune. Miss Bosanquet was her sole teacher, and conveyed her lessons in the least irksome way possible; and although Mrs. Shelley was of sterner mould, and sometimes scared May by her severe looks, even *she* made her a sort of pet, and would, to stimulate her attention and to save her invalid friend trouble, promise, as a reward for one half-hour of quiet attention, to tell her a story of long ago—some incident of her own youthful days.

May delighted in all Mrs. Shelley's stories, savouring as they did of the olden times; but some of them that were selected to form instructive contrasts to her own thoughtlessness, astonished even more than they pleased her.

The old lady had been one of the maids of honour in Queen Charlotte's Court, and used so to represent the princesses as models of propriety and good manners, as to set May wondering she had never met with such. Although the picture of three demure girls, with high waists and Vandyke ruffs, became stereotyped in her mind, she never thought it possible to imitate them, but only came to the conclusion that that sort of people must be quite out of date.

One of Sir Lionel's first presents to her had been a pony, and it was his delight to have her riding upon it by his side, attracting admiration for her beauty, and for the skilful way in which she controlled her spirited little steed. Without regard to times or seasons, he was constantly inviting her companionship, and, often when she had settled to some quiet employment, the ladies would be annoyed by hearing the smack of his whip on the window-pane, and seeing her pony standing saddled, ready for her to mount, Argus, a favourite wolf-hound, being always in waiting to accompany them.

It may be imagined that she was ever willing to leave the good little girls Mrs. Shelley used to hold up for her imitation to follow their own tastes, while she followed Sir Lionel, and the consequence was that nearly all her time was spent in rambling or riding about the country, to the entire neglect of her educational training. She fell into the habit, when not with Sir Lionel, of wandering away, no one knew whither, not only to the Hollow or to the Wood, both favourite haunts, but far beyond the precincts of the Warren. This made Mrs. Shelley very angry, Miss Bosanquet very anxious, and nurse indignant that Miss May was taken entirely out of her jurisdiction; but no further ill effects arose from the habit, until two or three incidents occurred, which, though trivial in themselves, may as well be referred to, as they were not only momentous in immediate result, but bore in some measure on the circumstances of her after life.

As an invalid, Miss Bosanquet's occupations were necessarily limited, and one of her pastimes was to arrange dried flowers on rice paper, to be afterwards mounted on card-cases, bracelets, or other ornamental *souvenirs*. So artistic and minute was their arrangement, that these floral compositions were not

unfrequently mistaken for painting or mosaic. May liked to watch the groups grow on the paper, and when particularly wishing to please Aunt Cam, would institute a diligent search for the tiny blossoms required for the work, which were often to be found hidden away among the short herbage on the hill-sides, where the grass was very slippery. One day, when thus engaged, she lost her footing, and sprained her ankle so seriously as to be unable to move. At length she was found and borne towards the house by a servant of the place. Miss Bosanquet saw her being carried across the lawn, and the fright experienced by that lady in consequence of the accident was so mischievous in its effect upon her weakened frame, that Miss May was taken seriously to task, and a promise required from her that in future she would confine herself to the grounds of the Warren. For some time she conscientiously kept to the length of her tether; but on a subsequent occasion, hearing there was a forsaken hornet's nest in the hollow of a tree that stood about a hundred yards beyond the prescribed limits, she thoughtlessly broke her bounds, and followed her informer through some long thick grass that lay between her and the desired treasure. No sooner was she in possession of the nest than her wet feet and soiled dress reminded her of her broken promise: she felt very sorry, for her aunt had explained to her the nature of a promise, and the thought of meeting a reproachful look from her sent her running to the lodge, to ask Dame Froggatt to help her out of her difficulty. But astonishment rendered the old dame quite helpless, and she stood looking aghast, without attempting to satisfy her necessities. May thereupon set to work herself to pull off her wet shoes and stockings; but finding they clung so tenaciously to her feet as to render help indispensable, and thinking

the old lady's daughter might prove more helpful than the mother, asked if Mrs. Burton were at home.

Instead of replying to her question, Bettie continued to bewail the misfortune, and seeing May dip her frock, which was besmeared with green bark, into a basin of water that stood at hand, her despair made itself audible in a way that tended to confirm May's opinion that she was the funniest old woman she had ever seen.

Encouraged by her listening attitude, the dame first entertained May with an account of her mother's specifics for cold, and then, mounting a chair, reached a bundle from an upper shelf. May stood speculating as to the nature of the treasure likely to be contained in a bundle of dirty kitchen towelling, and while the unrolling process was gradually going on her speculation had time to grow into excitement. At last Bettie got to the end of her roll, and revealed to May's wondering gaze a time-worn, moth-eaten, black-lettered volume, *minus* one clasp, which deficiency was remedied by a thick piece of rope.

'This were *her* Bible. A *good* woman she were, poor soul,' remarked Bettie, reverently handling the volume.

May gazed with wide-open eyes, and losing sight of the sentiment, burst out into a merry laugh; and turned round to behold the stately presence—of Mrs. Shelley!

Amazed and shocked at discovering her, with stockingless feet, treading the floor of the cottage, Mrs. Shelley turned to Alsie, one of the dame's granddaughters, who was standing behind her, and told her to 'take Miss May to the house at once, and to desire nurse to see her into bed immediately.'

She looked very dignified and severe: for once May felt a culprit; and hurrying on her stiff uncomfortable shoes and stockings, she walked quickly out of the cottage, as if anxious

to avoid a more arbitrary ejectment. For the first few minutes she did not turn either to the right or to the left; but seeing Phœbe, Alsie's little sister, looking among the leaves, eager in her search for something, she stopped, and asked her patronizingly what she had lost. Whereupon, Alsie inquired eagerly what had become of their little brother.

'He went that way, to look for his fardin,' returned Phœbe, coolly.

But Alsie appeared to be overtaken with sudden fear, and hastened to a spot where a well had been opened, followed at a distance by May and Phœbe. No sign of the child was to be seen, and she could not inquire, for the men who had been working there had gone home to dinner.

Where could he be? He had not had time to stray far from the spot; and if he had fallen into the well, which she found had been left unguarded, she would see some sign.

Alas, poor Alsie! she soon proved that the sign only wanted looking for, for a little handkerchief was clinging to the side of the well. She ran hither and thither, almost frantic, but there was no help at hand, and begging May to stand at a distance, and not let Phœbe go near the dreaded spot, she ran back to the lodge.

May stood where she was told to stand, entirely forgetful of her consignment to punishment, until brought to a sense of her position by the sight of Mrs. Shelley, pale and agitated, giving orders for the extrication of the child.

'Go home at once, my dear,' said the old lady. She spoke kindly now, and May went and delivered the message that had been entrusted to Alsie.

Nurse, although courteous while in Mrs. Shelley's presence, was always inclined to ignore her authority in her absence.

She had been piqued at her encroachment on her province, and seemed to find it healing to revolt, when she could do so without suffering from the consequences. So she answered curtly,

'It may be varra weel to put your feet in hot water, and to tak' a little drop of something warm, but to bed you shan't go.'

Replying that 'Mrs. Shelley had said she *was* to go, and that she would rather,' May proceeded to undress herself, and in spite of remonstrance, was tenacious in her adhesion to the line of conduct she thought right. Scarcely able to speak for sobs, she begged nurse to ask her aunt to come to her, and seeing that she hesitated, repeated her request, when a somewhat authoritative 'Go, nurse, please,' brought about the desired result.

Since quitting the scene of the accident, a train of impressions had led her to the conclusion that she was in some way implicated in the catastrophe. By degrees the fact dawned upon her, that it was owing to Alsie having aided Mrs. Shelley in her search for her that the child was left in Phœbe's charge; and, penitent and miserable, she awaited the coming of her aunt. When Miss Bosanquet entered the room, she was startled by the look of pain on her niece's face. She could hardly associate it with the usually bright beaming look of her thoughtless darling, and, seating herself by the bed-side, looked her inquiry as to the cause of her trouble.

May gave her an account of what had happened, her sobs increasing as she acknowledged herself to be the author of the mischief, until at last she could say no more, but, throwing her arms round her aunt's neck, cried so bitterly as to constrain Miss Bosanquet to weep from pure sympathy. Feeling that the present was not the time for reproach, she kissed May tenderly, and went away to learn further particulars.

May's fears were too well founded — the child was taken out of the well quite dead.

Miss Bosanquet was so affected by the description of the accident and Alsie's anguish, that she was glad to be quiet. Sir Lionel happened to be away from from home on that day, and for the first time in her life May was left uncomforted and lonely, to trace the ill effects of her disregard of rules. From this time her interest in the family at the lodge manifestly increased, and she was continually proposing to do something for them. Among other ways of showing them kindness, she arranged, with her aunt's concurrence, that a portion of her pocket-money should be set aside to form a fund, out of which Alsie might be apprenticed, or helped on in life in any way that promised to be productive of the greatest advantage to her.

A quiet sympathy was growing up between aunt and niece very pleasant to both, Miss Bosanquet having an admiring love for May, and May returning it with loving veneration. Mrs. Shelley had been unusually stiff and rigid since the accident, and this seemed to draw them more closely together.

It now became a matter of serious consideration with the old lady as to what was to be done to check May's mercurial propensities, and to induce more orderly and regular habits; and, as Miss Bosanquet was of opinion that it was simply unreasonable to expect order as the result of the 'disorder of means' by which her education was being carried on, they concerted together as to the desirability of engaging a governess, and of subjecting her to regular school-room discipline.

They were reckoning without their host, but the affair was brought to a climax in the following manner.

One evening, after the gong had sounded for dinner, May, as

usual, was found to be absent, whereupon Sir Lionel proposed that dinner should 'wait for a time.'

For such unwonted consideration to be shown to a mere child, who in her own young days would have scarcely laid aside bibs and pinafores, violently excited Mrs. Shelley's indignation, and turning angrily to her son, she dilated upon the imbecility of his general treatment of May, and wound up by saying that if he intended her for a specimen of a '*lionne*'—such a creature as he met in Paris last year (a good judge of horseflesh, and able to drive a four-in-hand)—he was going the right way to work; but that if he wished her to be fitted to enjoy a rational mode of life, he was making a great mistake.

Sir Lionel made no reply to her sarcastic harangue excepting what was expressed in an uneasy movement of his shoulder, for he was interrupted by the entrance of the young culprit herself, her face glowing from the effect of exercise, and looking most provokingly sweet and complaisant in her unconsciousness.

'Well, my fairy,' was his greeting, 'you must leave your wand behind you the next time you take flight, that we may spirit you into your place when dinner is ready.'

'Am I late?' she asked, colouring a little as her eye lighted on the ruffled countenance of Mrs. Shelley. 'I gave Daylight the rein directly I heard the gong, and only rode round by the beeches to see the children gathering the mast. One of the little ones fell down and scattered all her treasures, and I just waited until she could get up with the others.'

As she left the room to take off her riding-dress, Miss Bosanquet, who was almost as lenient towards May's defections as Sir Lionel himself, gave a glance at her old friend, thinking that this frank explanation might have been accepted as an atone-

ment; but seeing her still looking annoyed, said, addressing Sir Lionel,

'We have been talking over the desirability of engaging a governess for May, for I feel I am not doing her justice, and all this irregularity of which we complain arises from the want of some one to keep her employed.'

'*Confound* the governesses!' exclaimed Sir Lionel, excitedly. 'What will she be the better for knowing the names of all the Roman emperors and the genealogies from the time of Methuselah? I well remember the useless cramming process I went through, and she shan't be teased with any such nonsense.'

'If she could be taught to *keep still*, it would be *something* worth while,' interrupted Mrs. Shelley, gruffly.

'By the aid of backboard, dumb-bells, and stocks,' retorted Sir Lionel. 'I should like to know if that tree' (pointing to one on the lawn) 'would have been more to be admired if its branches had been grown in glass tubes, as we grow cucumbers. Give me free growth—no cramping.'

Miss Bosanquet smiled sympathizingly, and said,

'I do not advocate anything like undue restraint, but May is decidedly behind most girls of her age. She needs regular teaching.'

Sir Lionel declared that 'he would back her against any dozen girls she liked to name; that she was a *real beauty*, as she called her rose tree, and that they could not make anything else of her, do what they would;' and he went on to denounce all premature developments.

Miss Bosanquet replied, that 'instead of being prematurely developed, May reminded her of the corn that grows under a hedge—good in its germ, but wasting for want of proper influences,' adding that 'she was really ignorant on many im-

portant subjects, although in possession of a large stock of miscellaneous information.'

Sir Lionel muttered something about 'intelligent ignorance,' when Miss May made her reappearance, and handing her aunt a sprig of mignonette, said that 'she thought it was the last they should gather that season, and that that grown under glass was not half so sweet.' This *à propos* remark delighted Sir Lionel; and May, ignorant of the cause of his excitement, added, 'The little *mignon* likes sunshine and freedom.'

'Yet that which we find quite wild is entirely without fragrance,' returned Miss Bosanquet, with an answering look at Sir Lionel. 'Some cultivation seems necessary to bring out all its attractive qualities. My *mignon* might be improved by being a little less wild.'

May kissed away the gentle reproof, and dinner commenced with its usual formality, Mrs. Shelley preserving a grave and severe look to the end of the meal.

It was a moonlight night, and after dinner Sir Lionel and May strolled out upon the terrace. The valley looked very peaceful in the soft light; and as they stood watching the shimmering of the moon's beams on the river below, the quiet of the scene served as a calmative to their ruffled feelings, for ruffled they were, Mrs. Shelley's disturbance of mind having communicated itself to them.

Miss Bosanquet resorted to the shepherd-psalmist's remedy for allaying evil spirits, and played so sweetly, that May upon a gust of wind blowing off her hat, laughingly exclaimed,

'Such music as Auntie's should make the zephyrs hold their breath, instead of behaving in this unmannerly fashion.'

'What says my fairy to a ride of ten miles to-morrow?' asked

Sir Lionel. 'She would like to see Croyland Abbey, and I want to see Agramont.'

'An abbey is just one of the things I do want to see,' exclaimed May, glad of anything for a change.

'Ghosts and all?' was the facetious inquiry.

Yes, ghosts and all, judging by her bright look, as she appeared the next morning, ready dressed for her ride.

Sir Lionel regarded her with full complacency. He intended her to be the best mounted, best dressed girl in the neighbourhood, as, in his eyes, she was decidedly the prettiest; and while she rode by his side, asking questions and speculating as to the probable result of their visit, he felt that his dream respecting her was realized.

The morning was clear and bright, such as often follows rain, and they stopped many times to note objects in the distance, enjoying the lovely views to be had from the high ground; but, as they descended, the roads were very heavy, and Sir Lionel remarked on the rain having cut them up, adding that 'he knew a bespattering of mud was a mere *bagatelle* to such a well-seasoned horsewoman, but that she must keep her eyes open.'

They were going along a narrow road, on one side of which was a steep descent—so steep that they could not see to the bottom of it—and were walking their horses, Sir Lionel giving May a description of the passes between the mountains in Switzerland, when they were startled by a man, half clad and with black unkempt hair, appearing on the apparently impregnable side of the road.

'That beats the chamois hunters,' remarked Sir Lionel, as the wild-looking creature came in view.

'He 's got something like the rope with which the Thugs catch their victims,' said May.

A minute more, and he came abruptly in front of Black Douglas, when the beast seemed maddened by fear, and began to rear and plunge, to the imminent peril of his rider, while May's mare Daylight, sharing in the excitement, set off at a gallop.

The perpetrator of the mischief was one of those half-witted beings such as are frequently seen wandering about the unfrequented parts of England: he was lying wait for travellers, in the hope of collecting alms; but, seeing the mischief he had done, hurriedly skulked back to his lair, leaving Black Douglas to caper and prance to his satisfaction.

While Sir Lionel was trying to bring his horse to order by his reassuring 'So ho, Douglas!' his heart was faint for the fate of May; and, as soon as he had succeeded in calming him, he galloped quickly after her, until a turn in the road brought her into view, running towards him, while her mare was in the custody of a youth, whom he afterwards recognized as the son of his lawyer. When she saw him, she turned back to where Daylight was standing.

'A most fortunate circumstance my happening to be on the spot, sir,' said the young man, as Sir Lionel reined in his horse. 'A horse without control in such a place as this might make short work both of himself and his rider.'

May regarded the speaker observantly — she and her brother were given to rely on their physiognomical deductions — and Sir Lionel's face bespoke inquiry and concern, while the youth, William Bryant, gave a vivid and terrifying description of an accident that had there happened to a lady who had been dragged down the hill with her foot in the stirrup; and he magnified the perilousness of the position from which he had rescued May in a manner that astonished her not a little.

'Daylight was going all *right*,' she interrupted, addressing

Sir Lionel. 'I only let *him* take hold of her' (pointing unceremoniously at Bryant) 'that I might walk back to you.'

William Bryant gave an understanding glance at Sir Lionel, intimating that May was not the best judge in that matter, whereupon Sir Lionel expressed his unbounded thanks for the aid rendered, adding a hope that he should have an opportunity of thanking him at Scotswood.

The invitation was exactly to the young man's taste; and, as they rode off, he stood in the road, raising his hat again and again with obsequious gestures of farewell.

'Is he a gentleman? Why did he say Daylight was without control?' asked May, doubtfully. 'She was going quite quietly.'

Sir Lionel was so much relieved at discovering that no evil had resulted from the accident as not to be inclined to search deeply into motives, and merely remarked, 'that he might have seen danger unobserved by her;' but May was not satisfied. The question puzzled her all the way to Croyland.

CHAPTER III.

'As she came, a loveliest blush
O'er her fair cheek suffused, such as became
One mindful still of maiden modesty,
Though of her own worth conscious.'

CROYLAND ABBEY, the seat of Lord Agramont, was a relic of the times when monasticism was at the height of its power. It had been of great note in its day, both for the beauty of its site and the wealth of its community. At the time of which we are writing its situation had not lost any of its picturesqueness; and the same undulating slopes and softly flowing stream that had once delighted the monks of old were no less agreeable to its present noble occupant and the ladies of his household.

But, although the beautiful valley in which the abbey stood had undergone few changes, it was not so with the abbey itself; in it there was little to serve as a reminder of the class of men by which it had been formerly occupied. All the rooms had undergone material alterations, the quaint old fire-places and heavily mullioned windows alone remaining as evidence of their antiquity. For many generations it had been held by the ancestors of its present owner, but he spent little of his time there. As a benevolent man, and one of vigorous intellect, he made it the pleasure of his life to aid in the development of the

intellectual powers of others; and many whose pecuniary or social position was a hindrance to their advancement, would resort to him for help and encouragement, confident that their schemes or discoveries, if laid before him, would be listened to with courtesy, if not furthered with energy. Moreover, he was a hard-working statesman; and this was another reason for his frequent absence from his estates. But although the abbey usually looked sleepy, not to say desolate, in its grim grandeur, there were times when its wide fire-places were put into requisition, and then as gay a party was seated round the table in the servants' hall as when that hall was the refectory of the jovial Benedictines, who seem to have made the doctrines of Epicurus one of their chief studies. Twice in each year Lord Agramont received his numerous tenantry. On these occasions he would personally exert himself for their amusement, when it was pleasant to see the good feeling that existed between landlord and tenant, and the genial expression of appreciation on the faces of the guests, in response to their entertainer's warmly expressed wish for their welfare. He was very much beloved by them; and there was not one of them who would hesitate to give his casting vote in favour of his own landlord, if the relative merits of the neighbouring gentry happened to be under discussion. This popularity was probably mainly attributable to his accessibility—to his not investing his steward with absolute authority, but allowing a reference to himself in case of an arbiter being needed in any point at issue.

The children's feast was also a great day at Croyland. Then the sports were carried on under the shade of some venerable beeches that had given a name to the place known both as 'The Beeches' and as 'Croyland Abbey.' Lord Agramont always took a part in these sports, and his praiseworthy attempts

to accommodate himself to his company suggested the figure of Mr. Gulliver surrounded by his army of Liliputians. He looked well content in this novel character, and judging by the uproarious delight of the children, his happiness communicated itself to them.

In earlier life Lord Agramont and Sir Lionel had associated; but during the course of years their lines of life had so diverged as to leave no common meeting-ground between them. Sir Lionel had no criterion of right but his own inclination, and that inclination had never led him to exert himself in any way, not even to accept an office of magistracy. He deemed it a proof of eccentricity on the part of Lord Agramont that he should think it incumbent on him to burden himself with public matters, and to tax his brain with the solution of difficulties that might as well be left to paid agents. Lord Agramont, on the other hand, looked upon Sir Lionel's inertia not only as culpable, but as ignoble. With these adverse opinions, it is not surprising that their intercourse should be limited; but Sir Lionel, aware that Lord Agramont had formerly entertained a tender regard for Mrs. Bosanquet, relied upon the fact as a security for a warm welcome to her child, and determined to introduce May at the abbey, and, if possible, to obtain for her the companionship of Helen and Frances Douglas, who resided there under the care of a governess, Lord Agramont having taken them into his charge under the following circumstances.

Their father, Dr. Douglas, had been the Dean of the college at which Lord Agramont spent some of his early years, and had, soon after his introduction to the young nobleman, shown a marked interest in him. The friendly relations that existed between them originated in a college frolic. On looking out of the window of his room one morning, Lord Agramont was

surprised to see every window in the quadrangle of his college painted vermilion, and on inquiring the cause, was informed that it had been done to spite old Douglas, who had forbidden any one to appear there in hunting costume This explanation was the signal for a general outcry against the doctor, one 'slanging' him for 'doing the Napoleon' (Napoleon is said to have boasted of keeping kings waiting in his antechambers), another for interfering in things that were not within his jurisdiction, and others for trying to enforce arbitrary and unreasonable rules; the final proposition being, that a grotesque effigy of him should be presented to Magdalen College, to supply one of the missing gurgoyles, or figures that crown its buttresses.

Lord Agramont found himself the centre of a group, who were loud in their denunciations against one whom it had been his ambition to call his friend; and standing alone in the crowd, boldly justified the doctor's proceedings, giving it as his opinion, that if his restrictions did in some cases seem overbearing, his severity had been provoked by the unparalleled license that he had tried in vain to restrict. The doctor happened to overhear this generous defence, and with such a proof of the young nobleman's goodwill towards him, a friendship commenced, which time and intercourse served to substantiate and strengthen.

It was to the doctor that Lord Agramont accorded the credit of having given a bias to his taste and determined the bent of his genius, as also of having influenced his opinions in matters of the deepest import; and years after their intercourse had ceased he would recur with interest to tea-hours at college, when the dean used to look in upon him for a chat, frequently on literary subjects, but sometimes to confer with him as to what means could be adopted to put a check on the unprin-

cipled practices that were then, as now, being carried on by men who seemed anxious to distinguish themselves rather by the utter recklessness with which they incurred debts, than by swelling the honour lists of their college.

For some years after he left Oxford, it was one of his most pleasant holidays to visit the dean; but Dr. Douglas afterwards accepted a bishopric in India, and their intercourse was therefore necessarily interrupted. It was renewed, however, when Lord Agramont, anxious for a practical acquaintance with the state of our Indian possessions, made a voyage to the East.

The Bishop having found the climate of India so prejudicial to his health as to unfit him for any official duty, had removed for a time to one of the adjacent islands, hoping that sea air and the air of the hills would restore him to strength; but instead of experiencing the expected result, his weakness rapidly increased; and Lord Agramont, on visiting him, at once perceived that his friend's days on earth would shortly terminate. The doctor was aware of what was impending, and commended his wife and children to his friend's care, who, greatly to the relief of the dying man, promised to see them safely to England. The fulfilment of a part of this promise was overruled, for, shortly after her husband's death, Mrs. Douglas gave birth to a daughter, whereupon symptoms of speedy dissolution manifested themselves, and in a few days from the time of her great loss, she, too, was at rest.

Saddened by so striking an instance of the mutability of earthly things, Lord Agramont considered how he could best secure the welfare of the little orphan girls thus unexpectedly thrown upon his care. Remembering to have heard Mrs. Douglas speak with affection of a Miss Aberley (sister to her hus-

band's chaplain), and of her desire to return to England, he resolved upon asking her to undertake their charge.

The offer was made and readily accepted, and Lord Agramont, Miss Aberley, the children, and the nurse Sylvie, who had the sole care of the baby Frances, set off on their return to England. Dr. Douglas had never been a rich man, but always a liberal one, and as little but their mother's fortune reverted to the children, Lord Agramont decided on defraying all their present expenses, and allowing it to accumulate until they should marry or attain an age when they could manage for themselves.

Under these circumstances it was that Helen and Frances Douglas had found their home at the abbey, where their life had been hitherto uneventful. Miss Aberley had proved worthy of the trust reposed in her, and given herself up to her young charges, with a self-sacrificing love almost motherly. So unlimited was the confidence placed in her by Lord Agramont, that he did not see the children for months together, and when he visited them, his apparent interest in their welfare was limited to their material requirements. He would put his head in at their study door, with some such address as the following: 'My dear children are quite happy, I hope? You will not spare them any indulgence you may deem good for them, my dear madam: their happiness enhances my obligation to yourself. Ponies and harness all right? Can I do anything for you in town? They supply you satisfactorily with books?'

This had been about the extent of the communication between Lord Agramont and his wards, and while they were quite children they were pleased with even such meagre notice; but at the time of which we are writing, Helen required something more to satisfy her social wants, and after one of these hasty

visits, as his receding footsteps fell fainter and fainter on her ear, her breast would sometimes swell with emotion, a flush of pain suffuse her cheek, and in the fulness of her heart she would sigh for a real father—one who could understand her nature—one whom she would have a right to love, and who she knew must love her. But her disposition was so constituted as to render general expressions of pity or even sympathy unacceptable, and she would so resolutely quiet all external signs of agitation, and set about her occupations with such apparent interest, that any one less intuitively sympathetic than Miss Aberley would have remained in ignorance of the real state of things; but she could understand the unexplained want in her heart, and was pained to observe the flush and inward tremor followed by the forced calm that almost invariably resulted from Lord Agramont's visit to their room. On the morning upon which Sir Lionel rode with May to the abbey, Helen had been a prey to one of these moods. Her guardian had arranged to take her sister to the dentist, and opened the door to say that he was ready for her. He was very jocular and full of fun, and rallied Frances by predicting that she would make so light of having a tooth extracted, that should it happen that he was busy the next time he found it necessary to undergo a like operation, she would volunteer to act in his stead. His kind manly voice sounded cheery in the quiet room, and as he closed the door without appearing to think that it might give Helen pleasure to accompany them, she fell into one of the fits of melancholy abstraction above described. Miss Aberley noticed her change of colour, and, in order to divert her thoughts into another channel, proposed that she should undertake a commission to one of the villagers that would be better not entrusted to any one less responsible.

Although too reserved to ask sympathy, Helen felt the intended kindness, and, gladly acceding to the proposition, soon set off on her errand. She was very speculative by the way, imagining how things might have been had her parents lived, and reviving dim memories of the past, when she knew she must have been under her father's roof. She was not five years old when she left India, but could very well remember a delicate lady being led out on to a balcony in a land where the sun shone very brightly, and where birds of bright plumage glanced in its beams. The day on which her mother died she had also vividly before her. She remembered sitting on a mat playing with some bright blossoms Sylvie had brought her from the jungle (such gorgeous flowers as she had never seen since), and being disturbed in her pleasant pastime to be taken for a drive —that on her return a gentleman stopped their *bandy*, and told the horsekeeper not to approach the house by the usual way, but to go through the grove of cocoa-nut palms by the cinnamon garden—that he spoke in a subdued voice, and, stroking her cheek, had said, in a pitying tone, 'Poor child! It is early for her to be left alone!' This gentleman she knew must have been Lord Agramont, and although she was almost a woman now, she felt that a like show of sympathy would not be misplaced: never had she realized more than now her orphan state.

While she was indulging thus in reverie, we must follow Sir Lionel and May on their way to the abbey. On approaching the house, they saw a lady on the terrace apparently trying to coax an unruly tendril of a plant to fall gracefully over the side of a vase that crowned one of its supports; but as they had to round a corner to reach the front entrance, she did not observe them. When they entered they were shown into an apartment, which, judging from the elegant litter that strewed the

tables, had been lately in occupation. It was not such an apartment as would be generally selected by ladies as their *sanctum;* but it was better suited than any other for Miss Aberley's supervision of her charges. There was ample space for them to romp and still be under her eye, so that she had taken possession of it on first going to Croyland, and had never since felt inclined to move from her first quarters. At one end of the room was a large bay window, which admitted light only through the medium of bright colours that cast their rainbow hues on the marble pavement. At the opposite end were windows opening upon a corridor, admitting a clear light, by which one could better pursue any ordinary avocation. This portion of it was partially shut off by a folding screen, within which was placed the furniture necessary for a study. On two sides of the walls arms were fancifully grouped, except where a huge fire-place of ancient date suggested its capability of holding a fire sufficiently large to warm even that vast apartment. May was standing listening to Sir Lionel's remarks on the elegant tracery of the vaulted roof, when the lady whom they had previously seen on the terrace entered, and expressed her regret that they should have found Lord Agramont from home, adding that her eldest pupil was wandering round by the preserves, and would be with them almost immediately.

Entertaining a notion that he could not feel at home with a governess, Sir Lionel at once proposed to leave his young companion to make friends with her, while he went to look at a new importation of cattle he had observed in the park. Just as he was about to carry out his proposition, he was stopped by the entrance of a girl of about fifteen years of age, whose manner, upright and decisive, suggested a corresponding character; as she turned to Miss Aberley for an introduction, her heightened

colour redeemed it from a want of girlishness, and Sir Lionel and May were both prepossessed. Anticipating the usual formality, the former was his own introducer; and leaning over her hand, with a rather old-fashioned demonstration, informed her that he wanted her and May to be friends — that if Lord Agramont had been at home he would have put in his word for her, but that, as it was, he must leave her to make her way alone.

Helen's manner was more ceremonious than one is apt to expect from a girl of her age, and she replied in a somewhat stately way that Lord Agramont had long promised them the pleasure of a visit to Scotswood, and then looked at May as if to determine the amount of pleasure likely to arise from the proposed acquaintance. May was looking at her, speculating as to which of her heroines she most resembled: so that their eyes met, and, judging by results, the glance was mutually satisfactory; for when Sir Lionel carried out his intention of strolling about the park, Helen proposed, with some warmth of manner, that she should accompany her over the abbey. Brightening at the proposition, May readily acquiesced, and they set off together. Helen at once proceeded to point out that which was generally considered most worthy of remark, and was amused at the eagerness and reverence with which her visitor listened to her observations, and at the lingering pace with which she traversed the gloomy passages, as if expecting to catch inspiration from past associations. They were standing in a room that commanded a view of the most retired part of the grounds—one not unlike the ball-room at Haddon Hall, in which Queen Elizabeth is said to have danced the first dance —when May remarked meditatively,

'If I had to live in such a room as this, I believe I should

have done just as Die Vernon did—make a forcible escape! How weary she must have been of always doing the same thing! I suppose they did little else but work tapestry and spin? No books—no anything exciting!'

'There were books, and very good ones, in Queen Elizabeth's time,' returned Helen. 'Some ladies were very studious, and I remember seeing a specimen of calligraphy by some Scotch lady, such as we never see now. It was the Book of Proverbs, each chapter exquisitely written in a different character. Then we read of Arabella Stuart not only playing on the lute and virginals, but studying physic, surgery, confectionery, and the use of herbs.'

'I suppose I am thinking of an earlier time,' said May.

Helen smiled, and May continued:

'They must have been queer times, however. Imagine this room peopled as it used to be!—Formal gentlemen with their jewelled swords clanking at their sides as they bowed magnificently to stately dames in spangled dresses, with wonderful ruffs and embroidered gauntlets, or some demure young lady kept in order by a stern matron, who used always to be giving her raps with her fan. I should like to stop here and conjure up stories.'

Amused at her fancy-flight, Helen led the way to the tapestried chamber. Here her visitor carefully raised one piece after another of the tattered hangings, closely scrutinizing the panelling of the room, in the hope of discovering some door through which her heroines might take flight, or some secret closet in which they might be immured for the attempt, according as chance befell them. Disappointed in her search, she turned to examine a Venetian mirror, a buff jerkin, a huge pair of boots that appeared to belong to a giant, and a pewter dish of like capacious dimensions, fit to hold the barons of beef so cele-

brated in ancient story. These relics of a past generation were very interesting to her, and she was passing on in search of new treasures when the prosaic luncheon-bell summoned them to the dining-room. On their way they had to pass through the picture gallery, where warriors in corslets, buff jerkins, and starched ruffs, and with peaked beards and flowing love-locks, seemed to stereotype the pictures that had just passed through her mind; and she joined Sir Lionel, well pleased with what she had seen, exclaiming merrily,

'Lord Agramont has never had a mania for selling his ancestors,—there are rows and rows of them!'

'Perhaps, on closer investigation, you may discover that he has a manufactory for them, as the Pope has for saints at the Vatican,' returned Sir Lionel, enjoying her humour.

'I have not seen half there is to be seen,' she replied, excitedly, as if wishing to go in further search; but on Miss Aberley reminding her that sight-seeing would not do as a substitute for food, she reluctantly sat down to the table.

The meal passed off pleasantly, Miss Aberley proving that it was not impossible for a governess to be an agreeable hostess; after which, she proposed that Helen should show May some of her sketches, and leading the way back to the room into which they had first entered, she placed her young guest where she could conveniently turn over the leaves of a portfolio.

May was very much interested, and Sir Lionel, who considered himself a connoisseur in pictures, was about to pay Helen some high-flown compliment, when the entrance of a gentleman interrupted him.

It was Mr. Harrington, the curate of the village. He attended at the abbey to give Helen lessons, and had entered thus unannounced, expecting to find her with open books awaiting his

arrival. On discovering the room in the occupation of strangers, he grew nervous, and, depositing his hat *in the fire-place*, commenced pulling at a bell-rope, and making some vague remarks on his inopportune arrival.

May, who stood stroking the feathers of a little dead bullfinch, that had been left lying on the table, after having served as a subject for Helen's morning study, was looking at him observantly, wondering why he placed his hat in so unusual a place, when she was startled from her reverie by the bell-rope coming down with a run. Sir Lionel, to cover the *gaucherie*, proposed that the horses should at once be brought round. Then giving Helen and her governess a pressing invitation to Scotswood, made his adieu, and set off with May on their return journey.

Miss Aberley and Helen watched them from the terrace, May returning Helen's bows so vigorously, that Sir Lionel thought it necessary to remind her that, if she did not look out, a branch would catch her by her hair.

'I thought governesses were quite different from that,' she emphatically exclaimed; 'that they sat dreadfully straight, and that their curls would go all the wrong way.'

Sir Lionel was delighted. She had conjured up just such a ghost as had been haunting his brain, and he replied merrily,

'How would you like a governess?'

'Very much indeed, if she were like Miss Aberley,' was the unexpected reply.

Sir Lionel winced, for to him the thought of Scotswood being invaded by a governess seemed an unmixed evil. Leaving the possibility to dawn upon him, that, in spite of May's general cleverness, she might be the better for regular instruction, we will return to the friends she had left.

Mr. Harrington was one of the class of delicate, sensitively organised individuals whom over-work and under-pay deprived of the rest and change which are needful alike both for body and mind, and nervousness of a distressing kind was the consequence.

Helen had a great regard for him: she delighted in his lessons, and knowing that he would be mortified at having lost the mastery over himself, she lingered on the terrace, to give him time to recover, while he, appreciating the absurdity of allowing any little casualty to rob him of his self-possession, and miserably conscious that similar circumstances might again produce like results, quietly awaited her coming. She met him with her usual deference of manner, and it is to be hoped the litttle *contretemps* was soon forgotten in the interest of the lesson.

'Poor Mr. Harrington!' she said, after he had taken leave. 'He looks as if he worked too hard, and had no one to take care of him. I should like to see him in a snug parsonage, with a wife as good as himself.'

'Such an one might be difficult to find,' returned Miss Aberley. 'I doubt whether, with his wealth of intellect, he would recognize himself from your description.'

Helen looked up quickly. She had no thought of conveying anything to Mr. Harrington's prejudice.

CHAPTER IV.

'Some rude restraint, some petty tyrant, sours
The tranquil calm of childhood's easy hours.'

THE visit to Croyland to which reference has been made in the last chapter, had the effect of stimulating May to greater interest in her lessons. She became so importunate for regular instruction that Sir Lionel was constrained to listen to the united solicitations of the ladies of his household, and to sanction the projected change in her plan of education; but as he objected to any one but himself taking a decided step in matters that concerned May, and it being his habit to allow a long time to elapse between recognizing a necessity and setting to work to satisfy it, months passed, and still things remained as they were. At length, a report having reached him that Lady Louisa Trelawney was about to part with her governess, a note was dispatched to that lady to inquire if there were any foundation for the rumour, and a request that, if such were the case, Miss de la Touche would take an early opportunity of calling at Scotswood.

Early one morning the breakfast-room door was thrown open, and a footman handed Sir Lionel a card, on which was written the governess's name and address.

Taken by surprise and shrinking from encountering a stranger, he inquired for Mrs. Shelley and Miss Bosanquet; but hearing that one had gone for a stroll and the other had not yet left her room, he desired the lady might be shown in. Accordingly she entered, seeming determined that her want of height should not be matched by a want of confidence; and after fussily arranging her feathers, seated herself, and looked at Sir Lionel, as if to decide whether she or he were the stronger.

'Are you English?' was Sir Lionel's first inquiry.

The lady informed him, 'that a greater part of her time had been spent abroad, but that she was a native of Jersey.'

'Are you able to undertake the English education of my little girl?' pursued Sir Lionel, involuntarily making use of his newspaper as a partial screen. 'I must tell you she is a remarkable child—*remarkably* clever, and it is necessary for her teacher to be a person of superior talent.'

With a supercilious expression at the implied doubt, Miss de la Touche, shuffling in her chair, replied, that 'perhaps Sir Lionel was not aware she had *finished* the Misses Trelawney!' adding, that she believed that there was but one opinion as to her ability; that her voice had been compared to Malibran's; and that from her long residence on the Continent, she was an unexceptionable waltzer and polkiste.

'Literature—general literature?' suggested Sir Lionel, with an uneasy movement of his shoulder.

'I cannot *see* a book without taking it up,' replied the lady, with a simper of enthusiasm.

'A dangerous monomania,' thought Sir Lionel.

'Molière — Racine — are at my fingers'-ends: indeed, my masters always considered my aptness in acquiring languages something extraordinary. I consider familiarity with European

languages so important, that I never allow my pupils to speak English.'

Sir Lionel smiled, as he imagined the weighty inconvenience at the end of her fingers, and wondered how she managed, if it should happen that her pupils could not speak anything *but* English. He involuntarily thought of Raphael drawing flattering likenesses of himself; but while feeling he was in the presence of an uncommon specimen of humanity, concluded that such a concentration of talent was what was required in a governess, and after listening to some further commendations of herself, and reading testimonials of her ability from two or three ladies of title, he was glad to bring the interview to a close by saying that 'he supposed it would be as well for her to fix upon an early day for taking up her residence at the Warren.'

'Then I may consider myself engaged,' returned the lady, thus clenching the matter, and bowing herself out of the room with a look of pleased satisfaction.

Sir Lionel winced a little. Perhaps he had been too hasty: he did not quite like her dashing allusion to her titled patronesses, and he was not accustomed to hear people speak with so much fluency on the theme of their own accomplishments; but such confidence might be thought necessary in a governess; and at last he comfortably flattered himself that he had done the right thing, and carried out the wishes of the ladies at a meritorious sacrifice of his own inclination.

When Mrs. Shelley heard what had been done, she was exasperated at his folly, and severe in her taunts at him for setting up as a judge of what was requisite in a person who was to have the care of May's education; and left him very crestfallen, while she went to express her indignation to Miss Bosanquet at so unprecedented a proceeding.

On the morning after the arrival of Miss de la Touche, who had reached Scotswood so late that Mrs. Shelley had retired, the old lady, whose indignation was now at its climax, made her way to the study, and addressed the governess in a strain that was anything but consistent with good manners.

'Good morning, ma'am!' she said. 'You find yourself here under unusual circumstances, I should think. You can scarcely know what you are about to undertake. A pity you did not make a point of seeing those who could have explained matters to you! Is it not a very unusual thing for a governess to enter a house without consulting the ladies? It is to be hoped it won't be found to be a mistake. You may find your task to be more difficult than you expect. Miss Shelley is naturally self-willed, and, from over-indulgence, apt to disregard what is said to her. She is quick and clever, and requires a person with both common and uncommon sense to do anything with her. One great point will be to keep her to regular hours.'

Astonished at this uncompromising style of address, Miss de la Touche quailed a little; but soon recovering her usual confidence, replied,

'The points your ladyship mention are those on which I am extremely particular.'

'Don't call me "your ladyship,"' was Mrs. Shelley's startling rejoinder.

'I beg pardon, ma'am; I 've been so accustomed—'

'Not to call people out of their titles, I should think. It was a mistake—no further apology is requisite. Are you ready for your pupil?'

'Quite ready, ma'am' (Miss de la Touche never called Mrs. Shelley 'your ladyship' again); and May was summoned to the presence of her governess.

As it had long been her habit to attend to her lessons only in a desultory way, always giving her first attention to feeding her pets and gathering a morning nosegay for her aunt, some time elapsed between the summons given and the summons obeyed, and when she entered the study, Miss de la Touche stiffened her back, and gave so very stately a bow, that in spite of May's vision of cross curls and artificial manners, she was not prepared for the formality that awaited her. She had entered the room looking very sweet and quite at her ease, but was soon ruffled by the form of reception.

'In future, my dear, you will bear in mind that I am remarkable for my punctual habits. We will say nothing this morning about so great a disregard of duty, but in future you must remember that I never allow my pupils to keep me waiting a moment.'

May stood awaiting the conclusion of this introductory speech with quiet, graceful amazement, and then asked simply,

'What shall I do first?'

'I suppose you are mistress of the French grammar?' said the governess, handling some books Miss Bosanquet had sent in to her. 'Remember, I never listen to a word spoken in English. The Misses Trelawney always spoke French and Italian alternately.'

'I don't know it half,' returned May, amused at the supposition; 'and I cannot talk French, for I don't know how.'

'Your aunt tells me you are tolerably proficient, and I *must* have you speak it *toujours—toujours*,' she added, with an attempt at facetiousness. 'I conclude you have read most of the best dramatic writers—Dumas, Picard, Beaumarchais, Brueys, Berquin, Molière?'

May, unable to suppress a laugh, replied that she had only heard a few of their names; whereupon the lady shrugged her

shoulders pityingly, but told her that she 'need not despair, but must make the most of her present advantages;' and without observing that May could not comfortably accept her offered patronage, continued to put rapid questions as to her various acquirements, and ended by proposing that she would give her an opportunity of judging of her proficiency in music.

May made a selection, and sat down to do as she was desired.

'*Ma foi!*' screamed the governess, in a voice that startled her pupil. 'You are far behind the world, my dear: that is the sort of music we might expect to meet with in the wilds of Australia. Now let me hear your French pronunciation,' and she handed her a volume of Molière's comedies, open at a scene in the '*Mariage Forcé.*'

May felt inclined to rebel, but took the book, and read in a simple voice, but with an excellent pronunciation, the passage pointed out to her.

'No expression at all!' said Miss de la Touche. And taking the volume from her pupil's hand, she commenced to read in a dramatic high-pitched voice, shrugging her shoulders and showing her teeth the while, then wound up by saying, 'I don't expect you to read in this way, for I know my reading is something unusual, and you have never been taught, but I shall hope very soon to hear an approach to it.'

May's affection was fretted at the implied disparagement of her aunt's teaching, but Miss de la Touche was too self-satisfied for the thought to suggest itself that her freedom of remark might not be acceptable, and went on to inquire, 'What drawing she had done?'

For the first time during this catechizing, May felt some enthusiasm, and she replied,

'I am wanting very much to learn. I know some one who sketches delightfully. Auntie cannot go out with me. I should so like to try to take a view of the lodge from an opening between the firs: it would make a lovely picture!'

'You must not attempt too much at once,' was the unsympathizing rejoinder. 'You shall go on with your French, and acquire some style in your pianoforte playing, and then we will think of the drawing.'

'I have done these,' returned May, producing some very fair figures, which showed her taste for caricature.

'This is mere child's pastime,' said the governess, laying them aside with an affected disparagement. 'I kept Williametta and Johnetta Trelawney working at the first principles for years. There 's nothing so useful as a good foundation.'

'What names!' thought May, her enthusiasm effectually quelled; and, unable to suppress a weary look of annoyance, she laid aside the portfolio, and without asking leave left the room.

A spirit of disaffection had been raised, especially undesirable in a girl of her disposition — feelings of rebellion that threatened to end in warfare. Sir Lionel met her in the hall, and seeing a cloud obscuring the brightness of her usually sunny face, followed her to the room occupied by Miss Bosanquet, saying,

'I am going for a ride. I can't spare you any longer this morning. Aunt Cam must wait.'

'One word, dearest,' interposed Miss Bosanquet, looking up inquiringly. 'How have you got on?'

'I wish you could continue to teach me,' was the desponding reply; and then, her humorous vein getting the mastery over her despondency, she was about to give a comic abstract of the

morning's proceedings, when she was stopped by Miss de la Touche's unannounced entry into the room.

'I find we shall have to begin work in earnest, ma'am,' said that lady, simpering complacently. 'There is so much lost time to make up! Miss Shelley's reading, especially, is entirely wanting in spirit. I have been telling her that at her age Miss Williametta used to recite for hours, for the amusement of the guests at Charlton. People have said she might have been taken for a pupil of Macready's.'

Here Sir Lionel left the room, followed by May.

'I hardly think you can judge of my niece's powers at present,' returned Miss Bosanquet, amused at a picture of May declaiming in public. 'Regret for her loss of time may be in some measure allayed by the unusual readiness with which she makes use of the opportunities afforded her for obtaining knowledge. The time given to her has been very limited, but I have been pleased to observe with what avidity she welcomes any study that opens up to her a source of pleasant information. She will not work like a machine; but show her a reason, give her a motive, and I do not think you will have cause for despair. The natural qualities of our dear girl are such, that her instruction has yielded me abundant returns for labour bestowed, you will not find her deficient in general information.'

'I believe I have been spoiled for anything *mediocre*,' was the affected rejoinder. 'The eldest of my late pupils came out last year, and was considered the most striking girl in the room. —This is a strange contrast to my previous life, especially after the gaieties of a London season.' And she left the room with an air of pitying condescension towards the gentle invalid to find May standing in the hall equipped in her riding gear. She called to her to say that she was ready for a walk, intending to

remonstrate with her for disposing of her time without reference to her; but May walked quickly to her horse, mounted, and rode briskly off, leaving her to amuse herself in some other way until luncheon-time.

That meal brought her into communication with Mrs. Shelley, who, wishing to make amends for the breach of good manners she was conscious of having committed in the morning, took the opportunity of enquiring as to May's educational *status*, whereupon the governess intimated her pupil's deficiency, and announced that she always made a point of teaching conversationally during the daily walk, reserving a ride as a reward for good conduct, and that only once a week, except during the winter and summer holidays.

'I doubt very much the wisdom of compelling my niece to forego her usual exercise,' interposed Miss Bosanquet: 'we might think it well to limit the length of her rides.'

'What's that?' asked Sir Lionel, who now joined the party, in company with May. 'What do you think of this Diana, here, challenging me to a race? She not only outran me to-day, but has threatened to do the same at the hunt to-morrow. Is the game cold?' he continued as he seated himself before some scientific dishes,—he spoke quickly, as if to prevent remonstrance.

'These amusements will interfere sadly with my plans for Miss Shelley's improvement,' interrupted the governess, looking at Mrs. Shelley's ruffled countenance for approval. 'The Misses Trelawney were only allowed to ride when I could render a favourable report as to their diligence.'

'Confound the Misses Fiddlesticks, and all enemies to free air and exercise!' broke forth Sir Lionel, excited by a graphic account he had had of the morning's proceedings. 'Come

here, my fairy!' addressing May, who was meditating her escape. 'Your ride should have sharpened your appetite, and prepared it for a more substantial meal than there seems to be ready for us. The table reminds me of the Hidalgo's dinner—"a very little meat, and a great deal of table-cloth." And he laughed at his own sharpness.

'There is something substantial in the claws of this lobster,' said May, who knew a lobster to be Sir Lionel's favourite dish, especially if it had to be got expressly from London.

'That's more than can be said of many a clause in an Act of Parliament,' returned Sir Lionel, repeating an old pun; and taking up a paper, he referred to the proceedings of a Ministry who were promoting liberal measures.

May laughed merrily, and as the butler appeared with a relay of savoury fare, transcendental enough to satisfy even Sir Lionel's fastidiousness, Miss de la Touche, seeing that no one was inclined to yield her the attention to which she considered herself entitled, left the room; and Mrs. Shelley forgot May's peccadilloes while she engaged in a political discussion with her son. Sir Lionel and she were always well agreed on politics, unanimous in their dislike of innovations, and ready to sacrifice any individual opinion to the general principle of letting things remain as they were. In the afternoon May obeyed another summons to the school-room, and came away delighted that she was to have a holiday on the morrow.

When she appeared the next morning ready equipped for the hunt, there was a naughty look of unsuppressed triumph on her face, at having thus virtually set her governess at defiance; and at the sight of Sir Lionel's red coat, she flew out of the room in which she and Mrs. Shelley were seated, without either ceremony or leave-taking. Her speed was impeded, however,

by William Bryant, the youth who had so officiously stopped her mare when she was on her way to the abbey. He greeted her with warmth, and apologized for what might appear an inopportune time for a visit, but excused it by explaining that he wished particularly to see Sir Lionel on some business from his father.

'There he is,' said May shortly, 'but he is in a great hurry.'

He sidled up to Sir Lionel, and communicated some message which that gentleman evidently deemed of little importance, and then endeavoured to help May to mount.

'*You* have never served as master of the horse,' said Sir Lionel, jocularly. 'What say you to mounting Firefly, and coming with us?'

His visit had been planned thus early, for the very purpose of getting the loan of a horse; but he thanked Sir Lionel, as if overwhelmed by his unexpected kindness, in a way that struck May as savouring rather of subserviency than good breeding.

'A debtor-and-creditorship account would tell against me, I fear,' returned Sir Lionel, feelingly. 'Go and choose your horse, but let me recommend Firefly, as one that will give you an opportunity of displaying your horsemanship.'

Accordingly, Firefly was brought out, and the young man mounted in high feather. Sir Lionel's remark sounded pleasantly on the ear of the young aspirant for favour, and as he walked his horse by Sir Lionel, he did not forget to improve his opportunity, by calling to mind the circumstances under which they had last met on that same road.

After a time Sir Lionel joined some friends, and Bryant was left to May's companionship. A part of their way lay through heather and gorse, which in some places reached up to the girth of their saddles, and Firefly, either irritated by the prickly

shrubs or by the quality of his rider, curvetted and caracoled in so frisky and aspiring a style as to cause May to speculate as to how his freak would end. Quick-witted, sharp-sighted as she was, she had not been long in discovering that William Bryant was no horseman, and after watching Firefly's growing disaffection for him, was not unprepared to see him bob down his head, and by a saltatory movement throw his rider head over heels.

There was a large concourse of people assembled on Burley Tops, the place of muster, so that this exhibition attracted no little merriment, and the young man, somewhat crestfallen, scrambled to re-seat himself, and, execrating the unmannerly beast, hastened to regain his place by May's side, running against her in doing so.

'Daylight does not approve of being tilted at,' said May, patting her mare, and giving Bryant a wide berth. 'She's not a native of Don Quixote's country.'

She felt that they were being watched by the people on the hill, and a pair of soft laughing eyes met hers, with a merry expression which reminded her that William Bryant's scared, John-Gilpin-like figure did not distinguish her party in the way she would prefer; and when he said that he supposed she would stay on the hill with the ladies, she was not at pains to enlighten him as to her intentions, but, without remark, allowed him to ride away; then turning to her groom, said that she would follow as long as she could keep the huntsman in sight, or at least until she heard the 'view holloa.'

The trio that had left Scotswood in the morning did not meet until evening, when Mr. Bryant, who received an invitation to dinner, was profuse in his apologies for having 'lost sight of Miss Shelley.' There was a Joseph Surface manner about him

that had no chance of winning way with May, and she was quite ready to leave the dining-room in the occupation of him and Sir Lionel, and join her aunt; but before doing so she caught up a little hooded cloak that hung in the hall, and scampered across the lawn to the stables, to have a look at Daylight, and see that she was well cared for. At the sound of her voice, the pretty creature came from the far end of her stall, and put her nose through the bars, and as May stood fondling her, she overheard one of the stable-boys remark to a comrade,

'She won't be fit for anything this week to come. She's almost jaded to death. That ere feller didn't ought ever to have got on her. He must be an uncommon numbskull to pull at a beast's mouth in that way.'

May concluded that Firefly was the subject of remark, and for a moment the thought entered her head, 'He took his way of disgracing my horsemanship; now is a chance for retaliation;' but remembering that Sir Lionel was always more than usually careful in giving directions as to the care of Firefly, and that he would be vexed to hear he had been ill treated, she decided on not adopting such a measure, denouncing the prompting as ungenerous; and met her aunt in the drawing-room, happier for having resisted an inclination that had not the assent of her conscience.

'I do not think we are quite kind in leaving Miss de la Touche so much to herself so soon after she has come among us,' remarked Miss Bosanquet, as May entered the room. 'I was sorry you went out to-day. Suppose you go and ask her if she will give us her company this evening?'

'This was rather an exceptional case — there is not a meet every day,' returned May, by way of mitigating her aunt's distress; and she danced out of the room to deliver her message,

soon returning with the governess, who at once volunteered an exhibition of her musical talent.

The offer was willingly accepted, and she sat down to the instrument, one of Erard's magnificent grands, Sir Lionel's last birthday gift to May. A few chords brought the gentlemen to the drawing-room. Gratified by an increased audience, Miss de la Touche commenced a long rattling, booming introduction, in a style unknown at Scotswood, and then turned round, as if to see that every one was on the *qui vive* for what was to follow.

'That was the *rumblante* style,' whispered Sir Lionel, taking May on his knee. 'I think she might ask *one maravedi* to begin, and ten to leave off, Eh? Now comes a fusillade, with the cries of the wounded and the groans of the dying. She plays as old Queen Bess danced, "high and disposedly," eh?' he asked mischievously; when Miss Bosanquet, fearing an unseemly outburst not accordant with the rules of good breeding, made a diversion by beckoning to May to pick up a *couvre pied* that had fallen from her sofa. May prepared to obey immediately, but as she was slipping from Sir Lionel's hold, the governess began to sing, whereupon he added, putting his mouth close to her ear, 'Now for the *squalante* and *quaverante* style.'

This last speech had the effect Miss Bosanquet was dreading, and Miss de la Touche, finding that her music had failed to secure the breathless attention to which she considered it entitled, turned round, expecting, as a matter of course, to be overwhelmed with expressions of thanks and astonishment, but, instead, to find Sir Lionel and May looking mischievous, Miss Bosanquet anxious and distrait, and Mrs. Shelley holding her ears, distressed at the unpleasant vibration of the air. The surprised party immediately began to put themselves into more complimentary attitudes, and Sir Lionel remarked, by way of an

amende, that Mrs. Shelley found the noise too much for her nerves.

'Having lived so much out of the world, you are unacquainted with the modern operas, probably,' returned the offended lady, patronizingly addressing Miss Bosanquet. 'Grisi and Anna Thillon do not consider your favourites worth exercising their talents upon.'

Miss Bosanquet did not think it worth while to contradict her, and she turned to William Bryant, who had won her favour by the alacrity with which he had hastened to pick up a piece of music she had let fall, and entered warmly with him into the merits of modern composers. The two together talked the slang of the musical world with so much volubility, that Mrs. Shelley, who could not hear what was being said, when several people were speaking at the same time, exclaimed in a loud aside to Miss Bosanquet, and in a voice of considerable irritation,

'Bless the woman, how she talks!'

Vexed and distressed at the turn things had taken, Miss Bosanquet rose to leave the room, bidding May amuse her governess by showing her anything she thought she would like to see — Sir Lionel produced a valuable collection of engravings and autographs, and William Bryant took upon himself the exhibition of them, in so officious a way, that May, feeling her assistance unnecessary, soon followed Sir Lionel and Mrs. Shelley out of the room. From this evening Bryant and Miss de la Touche seemed to have entered into an alliance, for on his next coming to Scotswood he paid a visit to May's study, as if such visit were a matter of course.

CHAPTER V.

'Nae treasures nor pleasures
Could make us happy lang;
The heart ay 's the part, ay,
That makes us right or wrang.'

MONTHS passed, and May and her governess were no better friends. For some little time Miss de la Touche adopted the style towards her, a specimen of which was given in the prelude to May's induction into school-room duties—denouncing and disparaging her at every turn, while she descanted on the merits of her late pupils; but afterwards, discovering that it would be an unremunerative policy to conciliate Mrs. Shelley at the expense of offending Sir Lionel, she had adopted an opposite mode of treatment; and her commendations of May's quickness and cleverness now more than counterbalanced the unfavourable verdict she had at first given as to her attainments.

William Bryant now not unfrequently visited the study, where his presence was irritating to May, not only from a natural antagonism she felt towards the young man himself, but because on those occasions her governess's manner was more than usually disagreeable and capricious. She would dispute with her on the most frivolous points, and carry on a conversation with her

visitor in a style that May felt was intended to delude and impose upon *her*.

This fraternizing with Miss de la Touche was often carried on under pretext of exhibiting various specimens of rare animals brought for May's acceptance, and as additions to the Scotswood menagerie; but May, not being inclined to receive either William Bryant or his gifts, at last determined to resist the intrusion. On mentioning her objection to these interruptions to Miss de la Touche, that lady merely remarked that it was not for her to give orders for his non-admission. Whereupon May took the matter into her own hands, and the next time he came, told him with a good deal of childish dignity that she thought he could not know that he was trespassing on her private room, to which no strangers were admitted.

It had been before evident that she did not intend to recognize her governess's authority in any matters unconnected with her lessons; but this decisive acting strengthened a conclusion at which Miss de la Touche had previously arrived, that it would not be desirable to treat May any longer as a child, but that her policy would be to make her her friend. Accordingly, she at once seconded May's intimation that William Bryant should leave the room, and after he had done so, merely remarked with reference to the step she had taken, 'If *you* cannot have things your own way, I don't know who can! As heiress of Scotswood, you are surely entitled to command.'

Flattery, now became the habit with Miss de la Touche. At first, May listened to her whimsical praises with hauteur and indifference; but by degrees her judgment became distorted, and she seemed to be losing the nice distinction between right and wrong which had been so carefully inculcated by her aunt. Miss de la Touche's way of dealing with May might be com-

pared to the process of whirling and wheedling adopted by a certain sort of serpent to lure birds to their destruction, twisting round and round, and keeping its eye fixed on its victim until it becomes giddy and falls into the snare; for May seemed unknowingly to be yielding to some fascination destructive to her peace. A change began to manifest itself in her manner; she assumed consequential airs, grew disagreeably captious and imperious, felt ill-used if her gloves did not go on easily, and expected immediate attention to her slightest wish.

Miss Bosanquet observed it, but could only guess at the influence that had effected the change. Happily, there was no real coincidence of taste between May and her governess, and she would always gladly leave her companionship for that of her aunt, so that a struggle went on between contending influences, Miss Bosanquet hoping to apply a sufficient counterpoise to that which she felt to be detrimental. Had her health been less delicate, she would probably have taken a more decided step; but her want of physical strength inclined her to 'peace at any price,' and the long winter passed without means being taken to remedy the evil, except that, without appearing to act as Mentor, she would invite May to sit with her as much as possible, when she lost no opportunity of endeavouring to exercise a better influence.

It was a warm day in April, and the sun had put out the study fire, when May, weary of listening to her governess's underbred notions of things and people, strolled out on to the natural terrace, thinking there to breathe a purer air, both moral and physical, than that to which she had been subjected. The change was very acceptable, and she stood enjoying the fanning of the breezes on her face, and watching the soft flow of the river stream in the valley, indulging in an apocryphal fancy

that she should like to float away on it to some haven of unalloyed bliss, where no Miss de la Touche could intrude and cheat her yearnings after the good and great, when her reverie was interrupted by Sir Lionel, who stealthily approached to where she was standing.

'I cannot stay in the house this morning,' she said, taking his arm with a spring of satisfaction: 'I feel just as I should think the gold fish do in those little globes, when they keep their mouths open and go round and round, as if wanting more air than they can get. But I must stay at home, for I have something to do for Pasquale Favale,' she added, amused at the name of an Italian master her governess had introduced at Scotswood.

Sir Lionel advocated play first, and lessons afterwards; but as May persisted on the necessity of preparing for her master, he said 'he would arrange a seat for her in the grapery, and so do away with the necessity of her returning to the house.' Leaving her for awhile, he soon returned with two men carrying large pots of lilacs and some tree camellias in full bloom.

'Now for a table, a chair, and a rug,' he said, after ordering the arrangement of the trees, 'and we shall have a bower fit for the Queen of Beauty herself.'

Ensconcing herself with a gesture of childish satisfaction in the seat thus lovingly extemporized, she declared, 'that it would be delicious to spend the rest of the morning there,' and asked that her books might be sent to her.

The books were sent, but, unfortunately for her amiability, Miss de la Touche was the bringer of them; and although that lady endeavoured to flatter her into a more complaisant mood, by dilating as usual upon her various appliances for self-gratification, she was little inclined to be responsive, and, when the

governess proposed staying with her, manifested so decided a preference to be alone, that Miss de la Touche was glad to beat a retreat.

May took up a book, fully intending to become mistress of the passages selected for her study; but involuntarily her thoughts wandered to other subjects. Having no young companions to divert her attention from what she read, she was in the habit of applying and comparing her own circumstances with those of others; and as she sat abstracted and listless, oppressed by the perfume of the lilacs and the extreme brightness of the landscape, she drew an analogy between her own position and that of the traveller in Fenelon's 'Island of Pleasures.' But she had not arrived at the deduction that a little compulsory work, or some exercise of self-denial, would be likely to prove a wholesome antidote to her own life of over-indulgence, before an obscuration of the glass at one side of the grapery diverted her attention. A minute afterwards she was summoned to the house to see Lord Agramont and the Misses Douglas.

'It is the very best thing that could have happened this morning,' she exclaimed, jumping up quickly, to the peril of everything within reach.

And she was making her way towards the drawing-room when Miss de la Touche, who was ever on the alert for an arrival, met her, and remonstrated on the impropriety of her appearing before strangers without some change in her toilet. But May was given to overstep the rules of propriety, and not being fettered by any such punctilios, rushed hastily forward, leaving Miss de la Touche to decide whether *she* should put on her '*robe bleu*' or '*de soie*' in case the visitors might honour the schoolroom with their presence.

When May made her appearance in the drawing-room, Helen

Douglas was talking animatedly to Miss Bosanquet, but on seeing her she came forward with warmth to greet her. Lord Agramont followed her example, and holding her before him, and looking at her observantly, said,

'There must be something in that enchanted hall of yours very conducive to reflection. I should very much like to know what you were debating about.' Then (turning to Sir Lionel), he added, 'Looking at this face, I should not have judged abstract meditation to be the habit of its owner.'

Her bright smile, as she called to mind her serious mood, convinced him that his judgment was not at fault, and she turned interestedly to Frances; whose soft dark eyes and lithe graceful form had at once attracted her notice.

'I could almost fancy old times had come again,' said Lord Agramont, still addressing Sir Lionel. 'How very like! You have a lovely place here; and you would be at a loss to find one fitter for its presiding genius.'

May knew that she was the subject of remark, and becoming unduly elated, developed the mischief that was beginning to be implanted by her governess. For the time, the idea possessed her that she was already the 'Lady of Scotswood,' and that it devolved upon her to do the honours. She accordingly invited her friends to go with her to see the green and hothouses, which she pronounced to be very superior to anything they had at Croyland; informing them that their gardener had carried off 'all the prizes at the show.'

Lord Agramont, looked at her admiringly, and assuming that he was included in the invitation, rose to accompany her, and sallied out into the grounds, followed by Sir Lionel and his young wards. May chatted away very egotistically, talking of *my* flowers and *my* everything that was pretty and attractive;

but Lord Agramont, who from some mental obscuration could not just then see as clearly as usual, mistook her egotism for *naïveté*, kept her hand in jealous guard, and by his interested look encouraged her to pour forth unrestrainedly of the self-sufficiency with which her mind was charged.

'You shall take some flowers to Miss Aberley,' said May, addressing herself to Helen: 'perhaps she has none so choice as these—the gardener says ours are the best in the county.'

And she proceeded to cut some of the rarest blossoms with unsparing hand, robbing a choice orchid of its only bloom, and clipping the most delicate fern fronds with ruthless indiscrimination.

Helen followed through the long line of well-kept houses, looking haughty and unresponsive; but as Frances received the lovely blossoms one after another, with the anticipated delight of being the bearer of them to Miss Aberley, her eyes glistened with pleasure, and she held her treasures up for her sister's admiration.

'You shall have some grapes for her too,' added May, patronizingly; 'they are such beauties.'

'She will enjoy your bounty,' interposed Helen, who, thinking that her manner was even less gracious than her words, added by way of *amende*, 'Frances is always willing to burden herself with anything for Miss Aberley.'

May felt a little subdued, but she mounted a pair of steps and called for a basket, proceeding to cut some of the finest bunches, while Sir Lionel stood meekly by, telling her to point out any she would like gathered that were beyond her reach, as if it would be his greatest pleasure to do her bidding.

Lord Agramont grew impatient, and reminded the girls of the necessity of their returning home; adding that he did not

intend to do so without a promise from May that she would pay a long visit to the abbey very soon.

When they were seated in the carriage, he made a remark as to the probability of some girls being spoiled in May's circumstances, and then dilated upon her hereditary good sense as a safeguard against such a result; but Helen, who had been anything but charmed, was quiet, and sat wondering that he should so fail in his usual discernment, and have shown on an uncalled-for occasion a demonstrativeness of admiration so unlike himself. Lord Agramont was a great reader, and always had some pamphlet hidden away, ready to take out at a minute of leisure, and finding that his admiration met with no response, he drew one out from his pocket and soon became absorbed in its perusal.

Certainly in this case 'love was *blind*'—fortunately, in another, it was 'an *eye-water;*' and as the carriage rolled away, Miss Bosanquet, who had overheard some of May's remarks from the room leading to a conservatory, called to her, and asked if she could spare a little time to sit with her.

By no means unwilling, May fetched her work — a bunch of lamb's lettuce she had gathered in the early morning — and sat down to try and flatten some of the tiny blue florets for her aunt's use. The work was very tedious, and Miss Bosanquet, knowing that the persevering effort was the result of May's love for her, found it hard, under such circumstances, to find fault, and for a time entered into the difficulty of her work, and expressed her gratitude to her for her painstaking; but, on May's innocently remarking, 'that she thought Miss Aberley would be astonished to find what flowers Scotswood could produce, as she had seen nothing like them at Croyland—that, as Miss de la Touche said, she might well be proud of her beautiful place,'

the way was opened for remonstrance, and Miss Bosanquet remarked, with a decision of manner unusual to her—

'I cannot understand any right-thinking girl allowing herself to be proud of her possessions, or, in your case, prospective possessions; and I should have thought May Bosanquet would have seen the folly—nay, vulgarity—of attaching any undue importance to circumstances merely adventitious. To-day, for the first time, I felt ashamed of my niece, and then I was indeed sorry, not to say grieved, to hear her so entirely forget herself. I was anxious for her and Miss Douglas to be friends, but Miss Douglas is a lady, and possessions derived from without, dependent on mere accident, will have been quite an insufficient screen to blind her to the want of that instinctive good taste which ought to prevent any one possessing it from drawing disparaging comparisons between their own resources and those of their guests.'

May's face crimsoned, and as she realized the justness of the reproof, she crossed her arms on the table in a desponding attitude, and, laying down her head so as to hide her face, indulged in quiet tears.

'I knew that upon reflection you would see the matter in a true light,' said Miss Bosanquet, kindly. 'Indeed, that the thoughts you expressed were not your own — for we have so often agreed that the only real greatness consists in something far more enduring and elevating than mere worldly goods — I was surprised to hear you talk so very unlike yourself.'

'I cannot think what made me,' said May, raising her head, and with difficulty facing her aunt. 'Isn't it miserable that it should have happened on their first visit? I don't really feel that I am better for being richer than other people. I don't know *why* I talked in that way.' And then brushing away the

large tears of mortification that stood in her eyes, she said, 'Do pity as well as scold me, Auntie. I am as vexed as I can be.'

A loving gesture from Miss Bosanquet satisfied her, and throwing back her hair, as if with it to cast aside all unpleasant thoughts, she tried to resume her work.

'Pride of worldly honour is an old-world weakness,' returned Miss Bosanquet, anxious to make a deep impression, 'but certainly in this case antiquity does not invest it with dignity. Do you remember reading of a custom the Romans had of suspending a scourge to their emperor's chariot, that in the height of his power he might be admonished against pride?'

'I should not quite like a bell round my neck,' returned May, a bright smile beaming through her tears, 'but I will wear your miniature instead—it shall serve the purpose of the peppercorn that Honadir gave to Urad, and help me to think of the lesson I learned when I received it—but I don't think I can ever forget.' And as she remembered that her friends could only judge of her as she had shown herself to them, the tears would flow.

'I quite hope not, dearest,' said Miss Bosanquet, with earnestness, 'but your only security is in keeping the heart right. Remember that we have nothing we have not received—that riches involve weighty responsibilities, and that we are stewards of a Master who will demand of us an account of our stewardship.'

'I have quite tired you to-day,' said May, seeing how pale and excited her aunt looked. 'All seems to have gone wrong.'

'I think that having seen the thing in its ugliness, you will carefully guard against it in future,' said Miss Bosanquet, reassuringly.

Here Sir Lionel interrupted them. As he entered at one door, May made her exit at another, anxious to make up for the

morning's interruption, when, to her annoyance, no less than to her surprise, she found William Bryant again in her study. He had evidently been in confidential talk with Miss de la Touche, but, on seeing her, hastily rose to meet her, saying, 'he had been waiting to ask her acceptance of a cage of avadavats.'

May simply asked him, 'Why he had not come to her?' and turning admiringly to the beautiful little creatures caged on the table, said,

'If you have brought them for me, I suppose I ought to thank you; but I have to tax my brain for fresh expressions of thanks, and I do not like to see birds in cages. Will they live?'

'If they die they will make a fancy dish served up with their plumage on,' interposed Miss de la Touche. 'This one looks sulky,' she continued, opening the door of the cage, and pointing to one that was sitting with its head almost hidden among its feathers. Out flew one of the birds, and in attempting to catch it, she forgot to close the door, and another and another followed. Seeing them make their way towards the fire-place, May rushed forward, making appeals for help; but before she could interpose anything between them and the indiscriminative element, their little bones were crackling in the flames. Tears of distress rose to her eyes, and she walked to the window to hide them. William Bryant had secured the rest of the birds, and seemed to sympathize with her in her sorrow; but Miss de la Touche, whose manner in his presence was as unacceptable to May as usual, said shortly,

'Why, if they were Christians you could not make more fuss. I dare say Mr. Bryant will be so good as to get you some more.'

Irritated at such a misconception as to the cause of her grief, May did not vouchsafe a word in reply, but told Mr. Bryant that most likely he would find Sir Lionel in his room, and taking

up a book, inquired of her governess whether she were ready for her.

The young man had learned the secret of making himself acceptable to Sir Lionel, who seemed oblivious to the fact that his presence by his side involved the displacement of May, and encouraged his visits by the loan of a gun, a horse, or anything else that would add to his pleasure, while, in return for hospitality received, William Bryant was ready to perform any little service that would save him trouble. Among the servants he went by the name of 'Sir Lionel's shade,' and he reminded May of the tame serpent which is said to have followed a hero of Troy, and to have eaten at his table. One of Sir Lionel's fancies (and he had many) was a mania for white animals—white cows—white horses—white dogs—white cats—white rabbits. William Bryant lent his energies to the procuring of these creatures, and, in spite of a repeated assurance on May's part that 'she had already more than she knew what to do with,' would persist in bringing them as presents to her. Upon his presenting her with a Manx cat, *minus* a tail, she suggested the desirability of starting old Timothy Flynn, the pedler—an old man for whom she had conceived a liking—in opposition to the 'Happy Family.' But she could not make her wishes plain, and, fretted by Bryant's frequent presence when she would have liked to take her usual ride alone with Sir Lionel, she adopted a habit of absenting herself from him, quieting Sir Lionel's charge of desertion by a playful allusion to her 'blue' propensities. At that time a visitor to the Scotswood library might have frequently seen a little figure coiled up in an easy chair, deep in some exciting volume, her eyes glistening as she sympathized in the vicissitudes of some life that seemed to her more full of interest than her own.

CHAPTER VI.

'Why rushed the discords in, but that harmony might be prized?'

THE prospect of a stay at Croyland Abbey now became a subject of absorbing interest to May. Although her pleasure was somewhat damped by apprehension lest her friends should have detected that spirit of egotism of which she now felt heartily ashamed, still probabilities of enjoyment to be derived from the visit received many tributes from her imagination; and when her aunt was too ill to talk to her, or she was tired of her governess's society, or desirous of avoiding intercourse with Mr. Bryant, instead of resorting for amusement to some romantic production within her reach, as had been hitherto her custom, she would draw upon her own fertile brain, and with wonderful vivacity of invention weave a romance of her own, taking the abbey for the stage on which to introduce her characters, all of whom she was in the habit of investing not only with ideal, but impossible perfections. Living thus almost entirely in a world of her own, and, as we have seen, taking care that her world should be peopled with none but heroic and high-minded beings, she often felt it both incongruous and unsatisfactory to return to the real world in which her governess and Mr. Bryant were prominent actors; and it was a relief when one of Miss Bosanquet's 'good days' afforded her the pleasure of

her companionship; for although that lady was an invalid, and knew the disease from which she was suffering to be organic and liable at any moment to a fatal termination, she had a brave self-forgetting spirit, that enabled her to enter readily into the interests of those about her; and May knew that with her at least she would find ready sympathy. On one of these occasions, when aunt and niece were together, they were disturbed by Sir Lionel entering the room quickly, and, addressing himself to Miss Bosanquet, inquiring, in an angy tone of voice, 'if she knew anything about the damage done to the French clock in the drawing-room?' adding, 'that he had never known any of the men touch it, and that if he did find them meddling with such things, he would set them scuttling like rabbits with a weazel at their heels; that he did not believe there was a workman in England that could mend it.'

The damaged clock was the one that had attracted May's attention on the first night of her arrival at Scotswood, and on hearing of the accident she coloured deeply, possibly from regret that a favourite source of amusement was rendered useless, but more probably from sympathy in Sir Lionel's unusual excitement, than from any distinct cause. Unfortunately, Miss Bosanquet observed her emotion, and, misinterpreting its cause, looked at her gravely, and said,

'*You* know nothing about it, May?'

To be addressed thus by her aunt was a thing of so unusual occurrence, and sounded so like a reproof, that it increased her confusion; and as by degrees a recollection dawned on her mind of having heard a scuffle when she went into the drawing-room the night before, and Miss de la Touche saying, in subdued tones, 'Know nothing about it,' her confusion manifestly increased.

She was conscious that her manner must be inexplicable to her aunt, but felt it would be ungenerous to explain it, in case the remark she had accidentally overheard should have had no reference to the subject under discussion, and, feeling she had nothing else to say, simply disclaimed any knowledge of the mischief.

Miss Bosanquet had never known her to condescend to a falsehood; but why this confused manner? She felt very anxious and troubled, and averted her glance, not liking to meet the look which she felt must naturally be the accompaniment of guilt.

Meanwhile Sir Lionel, after one glimpse at the ruffled face of his darling, concluded that, with her usual curiosity, she had been trying to understand the machinery of the clock, and that so the accident had happened, left the room without further remark. Had he been an observer, he would have known that unexplained emotion is not necessarily an evidence of guilt, but that the knowledge that one is suspected is often sufficient to produce its signs.

The least excitement often caused complete prostration of power with Miss Bosanquet; and in this case a fear lest Sir Lionel should at once dismiss some of the servants, together with the nervous dread that May alone might be to blame, caused her to lean back on her sofa utterly powerless. Sir Lionel, although an indulgent, was an imperious master; and such freaks as dismissing servants without reason or justice were not unknown in her experience. He was in the habit of saying 'he *would* have his own way, or know the reason why,' and as he was no exception to the rest of the world, and sometimes found it difficult, he resorted to other means to satisfy himself. The following will serve as a specimen of the sort of things he

did: May having been kept waiting for an egg longer than he thought necessary, he rang the bell hastily, and desired that a saucepan and an egg might be brought to the breakfast-room; and as the cook had the unheard-of audacity to send word that there were no parlour saucepans, he went to the town and brought home a boy laden with a supply sufficient to furnish a stall in a market. Upon another occasion, hearing that the servants complained they had a long way to fetch wood for the fires, he gave orders that the next cart-load should be shot down immediately in front of the house, so that all visitors on arriving might bear witness to his consideration for his servants.

May was now growing from a child into a reflecting girl, able to sympathize in her aunt's anxieties, and to feel with her that there was a disgrace attaching to such whimsical and unreasonable proceedings. Noticing that every particle of colour had now fled her cheek, and that her eyes were closed as if she were suffering, she steeped a handkerchief in Cologne water, and, first stooping to kiss her, put it to her forehead.

A look of thanks called up such a sweet return glance from May, as to remove any doubt Miss Bosanquet might have had as to her innocence: she *knew* that she had no share in the accident—that there was nothing covert to belie the sincerity of her expression. Who could look at it and not pronounce it to be as honest as it was beautiful?

'I am glad you were not the unfortunate perpetrator of the breakage,' she said, smiling confidently. 'How much better it would be if each member of a family made it a principle to confess an accident immediately on its happening! from not doing so, the peace of the whole household may be destroyed.'

The truth of which remark was in this case soon made manifest; for Mrs. Shelley, who had been the first to be apprized of

the grievance, took upon herself the examination of all in the house, and, after making the servants angry that they should even be suspected of the mischief, she paid a formal visit to Miss de la Touche, who in the most unequivocal terms denied any knowledge of the accident, at the same time referring her to May as one curious in such matters.

Mrs. Shelley, knowing the careless, lawless habits of the individual respecting whom her judgment was called in question, was induced to lay some stress upon this inuendo; and upon hearing from May that she knew nothing about it, her manner became more than usually stiff and formal to her, and often caused her to look up quickly for an explanation of some cold or caustic remark, until, quite at a loss to account for such marked reserve, she at last guessed at the true state of the case, and inquired of her aunt one day if she thought any one accused *her* of breaking the clock?

'If they do, they will have to reproach themselves for a false accusation: of that I am quite sure, my darling,' returned Miss Bosanquet, affectionately.

'I am glad you feel so, Auntie; but do you think there *is*? If I thought that any one I love could think such a thing—I mean that I would not confess it—I——'

Either she could not find words to express the despair to which such a state of things would give rise, or a choking sensation prevented the utterance of them; and as she fancied a doubt was to be implied in her aunt's answer, a tear of mingled pride and sorrow started to her eye; but, struggling with her emotion, she said,

'Just one word from the person who did it would have saved all this,' and, in her solicitude entirely to vindicate herself, was for a moment tempted to say what she had overheard; but the

next, remembering there was no solid foundation for her suspicion, restrained herself, and merely said, 'I thought whoever did it would have confessed it long ago.'

'It is difficult to understand any one allowing a slur to rest upon the character of another when it is in their power to remove it,' returned Miss Bosanquet; 'but do not let us talk about it, darling; no doubt something will happen shortly to throw light upon the matter.'

May did not *talk* of it, but she *thought* of it continually. Herself as simple in speech as the Houynhyms met by Gulliver in his travels, who, regarding speech as given to them solely for the purpose of communicating facts, considered its end defeated if they swerved in any degree from the truth, she felt surprised that so long a time should elapse, and so much inquiry have been made, and that still the perpetrator of the accident should refuse to come forward. While the doubt remained, her constitutional love of truth suffered: she could not keep her thoughts from wandering to the unsolved mystery, and sometimes during her lesson Miss de la Touche would hint at some obscure reason for their abstraction, though carefully abstaining from making any direct charge.

At this time May led a more than usually isolated life; she felt glad to be alone, or at least to avoid the presence of all the household with the exception of her aunt and Sir Lionel. Her governess and William Bryant were still 'friends,' and were not unfrequently in each other's company, probably from their ability to render mutual service.

Mr. Bryant claimed a distant cousinship to Dr. Coleridge, the Scotswood doctor, and upon the strength of this relationship had access to his surgery. From this repository he used to abstract effervescing draughts, spirits of lavender, cough lozenges,

and similar little comforts, for the benefit of his friend; while the lady returned his attentions by acquainting him with the ways and doings of the inmates at the Warren, and served him in any other way her characteristic generosity might suggest, such as by extolling his virtues to her pupil, or warding off suspicion from him by casting it upon the innocent, as in the matter of the clock.

For some days after May had overheard the injunction, 'Say nothing about it,' Mr. Bryant had not visited the Warren; but when he did arrive, the governess took an early opportunity of setting him at his ease, by informing him not only how cleverly she had averted the discredit from him, but where the blame rested; and, shame though it be to confess it, he was content to remain an unprotesting party to her unscrupulous diplomacy. It seems probable that she herself had some prickings of conscience as to the strict honour of her proceedings; for when May afterwards joined her in her study, she was very irritable, and much more exacting in her requirements than had lately been the case. She disputed provokingly on unimportant points, showed up her mistakes in a way which seemed rather to gratify her own ill-nature than for the purpose of improving her pupil; and, although May had lately been inclined to bear reproach for indolence and inattention, feeling that censure on that score had not been altogether undeserved, her feelings were fast ripening into exasperation at this continual provocation, and were brought to the culminating point by an exercise being returned for her to dot her *i*s and cross her *t*s more distinctly.

Instead of obeying readily, May fell into a reverie, out of which she was startled by her governess saying,

'Really, Miss Shelley, it's no use my sitting here watching your meditations; if there is anything on your mind, you'd

better confess it at once, and there'll be an end of it. You're making it worse by neglecting your lessons in this way: it would be much better for you to make up for any fault by greater circumspection in future.'

With an intuitive conviction that Miss de la Touche was in some way implicated in the mischief that she thus indirectly imputed to her, it would not have been May Bosanquet, could she have quietly brooked this taunt. Fairly stung to insurrection, her little figure elevated itself with dignity, and for a moment she stood confronting her governess, her eyes sparkling and colour rising, but evidently unable to speak; she then said,

'I don't know what you mean, unless that I broke the clock. *You know* I did not do that. If *I* had done it I should have had courage to confess it.'

Her childish nature showed itself in the effort it caused her to enunciate her indignation; but, although every muscle was quivering, and as she stood hesitating what course to pursue, her movement might be compared to the shivering of the sails of a vessel while filling, she soon recovered herself, and with eye and mien evincing indignation and contempt, said,

'You are not fit to be a governess, and you shall not be *mine!*'

Quailing beneath her unflinching glance, and aghast at the aspect things were assuming, Miss de la Touche would have willingly recalled her graceless speech, but, without condescending to an interchange of words, May went out of her presence, and soon after found Sir Lionel in his own room.

'Well, my queen,' he said as she entered, at the same time laying down his newspaper, 'I thought you were going to cheat me altogether this morning;' then, observing her extreme pallor, stopped short and drew her towards him.

'Your queen comes with a petition,' gasped May, catching his humour, although hardly able to command her voice sufficiently to make herself audible. 'You will never guess what it is,' she said; 'but I want you to say I need not go in to Miss de la Touche any more.'

Her beseeching look Sir Lionel thought might have conciliated an ogre.

It was unusual for May to appear before him as a suppliant, and with inquiry in his tone (supposing Miss de la Touche had been repeating the mode she adopted towards her pupil on first taking up her abode at the Warren), he replied,

'Say on, my fairy. My word! if she has been at that game again, she shall soon "show us a fair pair of heels."'

'She hints that *I* broke the clock!' continued May, breathlessly. 'As if I should not have confessed it at once!' she added, proudly. 'I can't bear her manner. If she had any proof against me, why did she not show it? It is so cowardly of her! I could have resented an open reflection, but, instead of giving me such a chance, she has been hinting at my having done something very bad, without saying what. I suppose she means I broke the clock. I can't bear her to teach me, and I said she should not.'

Fortunately, May's anxiety lest she had taken too much on herself prevented her observing the smart her words were inflicting on Sir Lionel, who felt that her reproach applied almost as justly to himself as to the governess; and he endeavoured to compensate for the apostacy of which his conscience accused him by heaping terms of contempt on the offending party, while he drew May into a corner of his arm-chair and endeavoured to calm her excitement.

'I should like to know what we care for what she thinks?' he

said, rallyingly. 'We'll send all the governesses to the United States, so that they did not vex my child. It was a mistake her coming here. It would never have been so if I had had my will.'

May had thought of asking him to undertake the task of telling her aunt and Mrs. Shelley of her trouble; but after listening to what struck her as a somewhat senseless because indiscriminate denunciation of governesses generally, she had her misgivings as to whether he would be likely to do it in the best way possible, and resisting the childish treatment he was adopting towards her, by gradually slipping from his restraining hold, asked anxiously,

'May I tell Aunt Cam that I need not go to Miss de la Touche again?'

The desired permission was readily granted, and, with a look of relief that her resolution had not to be rescinded, she left the room to fulfil her self-imposed errand, looking very like '*Le lièvre qui fait le brave;*' for although she felt a sanction in her own breast for what she had done, she feared lest she might fail to make a due impression on others; and it always pained her to distress her aunt, whom she knew to have a particular dread of anything approaching dissension, or even a want of harmony in members of the household. One glance, however, at the malicious unprincipled acts of which she had been the subject, gave her fresh courage,—

'Such griefs are proud and make their owner stout;'

and she went boldly on, and determined to tell her exactly what had happened. On discovering Mrs. Shelley was in the room she felt a little daunted, but told her tale with a steady voice, expressing herself very carefully. There was solicitude in her

tone; but her truthfulness of manner was not to be mistaken: her indignation was just such as would naturally arise in a sincere mind on being subjected to indefinite grounds of imputation; and Mrs. Shelley, who had been looking at her observantly through her spectacles, and was unwilling to acknowledge that there was reason why Miss de la Touche should leave Scotswood, said, in a pained voice, when May had finished,

'You had better stay where you are, my dear.'

Miss Bosanquet answered to May's look of inquiry as to how she felt she had behaved, by saying,

'We will not let it trouble us, love. I believe it is all for the best.'

A few minutes after a note was handed in to the ladies, to the effect that Miss Shelley's inattention rendering the instruction of a governess quite useless, Miss de la Touche felt it desirable to discontinue her services at the Warren.

'A vile cramped note from de la Touche!' said Sir Lionel, throwing down the epistle.

And so the matter was settled, very much to Miss Bosanquet's satisfaction, who was glad of a pretext to be rid of one she considered totally unfit for her post.

From that time Mrs. Shelley's manner to May became markedly kind—almost respectful—and the young girl, heartily enjoying the feeling that her faith was well established, set regularly to her lessons, and gave the ladies as little cause as possible to regret the absence of a governess. The trust and deference with which she felt Mrs. Shelley now regarded her, satisfied her pride no less than her love, for she had been stung as well as wounded by the misunderstanding; and this incident, trifling though it may seem, had the effect of uniting all members of the family

in closer affection. May, accepting the old lady's manner as an apology for the wrong done her, now accorded her a full share of her sweet looks and words; and weeks passed without anything happening (saving an occasional visit from Mr. Bryant) to disturb her newly-found happiness. She was now veritably the sunbeam in the house Sir Lionel had prophesied she would be. But sorrow is at hand — clouds will dispel for a time all sunbeams.

May was standing one morning in the bay of the breakfast-room, listlessly watching the drops of moisture condensing and chasing each other down the glass of the window, when her attention was arrested by an unusual noise in the hall and on the staircase, and she went out to seek an explanation of its cause. The first person she saw was North, Mrs. Shelley's personal attendant. The woman was crying, and appeared too much affected to speak.

'What is the matter, North?' she asked. 'Please tell me! Where is my aunt? Where is Sir Lionel?' she added eagerly, making her way to the stairs.

'If you please, miss, don't go up there. Miss Bosanquet particularly wishes you to stay down for a little while. My mistress is very ill.'

Had it been Sir Lionel or her aunt who had been ill, she would have run to them at once; but Mrs. Shelley might feel it to be an intrusion, and she listened to the ringing of bells and the whisperings of the servants, at a loss to know why such confusion should have taken place so suddenly. North had come down to dispatch a messenger for Dr. Coleridge, and faces of inquiry and alarm were gathering about the kitchen offices: all this was very exciting to May, and after this the house grew painfully quiet, and she was greatly relieved when Dr. Coleridge's

carriage drew up and broke the silence. He gave her a nod as he went up the stairs, but did not speak, and she waited in the hall, hoping to see some servant of whom to inquire for news, but when she did so no one seemed inclined to satisfy her. After Dr. Coleridge left, she heard Sir Lionel go into his own room and lock the door in a way as if he did not wish to be intruded upon. Then followed the rush of servants returning to their several quarters, from which they had congregated to hear the doctor's verdict. Presently a summons came for her to her aunt's room, and then she learned from her in broken accents the cause of the excitement. Mrs. Shelley had gone up to bed the night before apparently in her usual health; but not having rung her bell in the morning, as was her custom, North had opened her door, and found her mistress quite dead, sitting in her chair leaning her head on a book she had been reading. She had taken off her spectacles and lain down her head before yielding to the summons that for ever closed her eyes on the scene of life.

This was May's first realization of death. Hitherto she had practically considered herself and those around her immortal. At first her sorrow arose more from sympathy with her aunt than from a feeling of personal loss; but as by degrees the stern truth presented itself fully to her mind that the picturesque old lady was gone for ever from the familiar place in her arm-chair by the fireside, that she could never see her again, or hear from her lips those marvellous tales that used so to please her when she was a child, she wept for herself. Miss Bosanquet liked to speak of her kind old friend, and when she enumerated her good qualities, to obtain from May an accordant response. They were very much together during this time of sorrow, for Sir Lionel confined himself to his own room, admitting only

Mr. Bryant to his presence. Miss Bosanquet called May her little comforter, and not without reason, for traits of tenderness, hitherto undeveloped, now displayed themselves in her lively nature.

One day she was folding up a hood that the old lady used to wear in her walks on the terrace, feeling as if she would like to rescue it from the touch of indifferent hands, when Miss Bosanquet remarked to her,

'*She* would have liked to see you do that, love,' and went on to tell her that the night before Mrs. Shelley died she had said to her incidentally, 'When it shall please God to take me, I should like our dear May to have all my trinkets given to her as from me. They will remind her of not too much indulgence, perhaps; but tell her I feared to spoil her.'

At this evidence of tenderness May wept bitterly. There is always something very sad in the fact of enriching oneself through the death of friends; and in this case peculiarly so; for the treasures which came into May's possession were the accumulation of a long lifetime: childish hoards, love-tokens, treasured gifts of love and gratitude, wedding presents—all served to make the sum total of Mrs. Shelley's legacy to May. Miss Bosanquet talked them over with her, called up the feelings with which they were probably received, and drew from the reflection a vivid illustration of the mutability of all life's interests. Such were the reflections that occupied the thoughts of the real mourners during the week that followed the old lady's death; while the servants carried on many an animated discussion as to the pecuniary value of their mourning habiliments, deciding closely between the relative merits of alpaca, orlean's cloth, and merino.

Then came the sad day when prancing horses and nodding

plumes paid their mock homage to the stately old lady, who had in her time entered with much keen interest into all the pomp and pageantry of life, in a way corresponding with her estimated dignity, and when some heartfelt expressions of sorrow from the cottagers fell pleasantly on Sir Lionel's ear, proving that heart homage was not altogether wanting on the occasion.

'She was a real lady,' said one.

'Come down aff frae there, laddie. Mind your manners! It'll just be the lady up yon at the house,' said another, addressing herself to an urchin who, mountebank-like, was scrambling up a post to get a full view of the sable procession as it passed solemnly over the untrodden snow.

'The good always go first,' said a third. (The old lady had reached her ninetieth year.)

And, except in the hearts of a very few, with such commonplace expressions as these passed away the memory of Mrs. Shelley.

CHAPTER VII.

'And ever in her mind she cast about
For that unnoticed failing in herself
Which made him look so cold.'

AS soon as the gloom of the old year had given place to the hopefulness of the new, it was arranged that May should pay her long-meditated visit to the abbey. Sir Lionel was going north, and was anxious that it should take place during his absence. When the plan was first proposed, May, thoughtful in all things in which her aunt's comfort was involved, was unwilling for her to be left alone; but Miss Bosanquet set her at ease, by saying that she should quite enjoy a time of entire rest, and that it would afford her pleasure to listen to all she had to tell her on her return home; thus reassured, the light-hearted novelty-loving girl was quite ready to accept the invitation, anxious to substantiate her fancy-wrought visions of enjoyment.

The fact of May having left a house of mourning was sufficient to interest both Miss Aberley and her pupils on her behalf; they welcomed her with much warmth, each one feeling it incumbent on her to do all in her power to render her stay among them as cheery and pleasant as possible. The morning after her arrival, Miss Aberley proposed to give her some lessons

in drawing; and, as May gratefully accepted the offer, it was arranged that during her visit the early part of each day should be spent as when Helen and Frances were the sole occupants of the study.

But it soon became manifest that Lord Agramont did not intend school-room duties to go on as usual; for, just as they were seating themselves to their occupations, he put his head in at the door, and said that he had ordered the horses to be brought round, hoping to have the pleasure of a ride with them. Miss Aberley, ever watchful lest any want of alacrity on the part of her pupils should be an impediment to their guardian's attention, desired them to leave everything just as it was, and to go and get ready at once; while May, taking care that it was understood she might return again to her work as occasion permitted, gladly ran away to equip herself in her riding gear; and a few minutes afterwards Lord Agramont was accompanied by three as charming girls as ever cantered over hill and dale.

May was always at home upon horseback, and as she rode along chatting merrily to her host, some of her joyous light-heartedness seemed to communicate itself to him; for Helen observed that he looked more animated and courteous than she had ever before seen him, and a feeling of mortification arose in her mind on the reflection that a comparative stranger had the power to excite an interest during a few hours' acquaintance, which she had failed to do in the course of the many years she had resided at the abbey. Chafing under the rivalry, she loitered a little in the rear, dwelling upon her imaginary wrongs, and inclining for a moment to a resentful feeling towards the innocent author of them; until a halt, and a winning, irresistible look from May called her to herself, and caused the

frostwork of her indignation to give way to the warmth of a sunny smile.

'Do listen to that laugh,' exclaimed May: 'some one's fancy is immensely tickled!'

And a minute after, a youth sprang over a gate a few paces in front of them. The look of inquiry on the part of the girls was met by a raising of the hat on that of the gentleman, the unruly muscles of whose face did not easily subside into gravity; and May, thinking she had met that clear and cheery expression before, hastened to join Lord Agramont.

'What! have you met with a knight-errant already?' he asked.

May laughingly replied that if he were a knight at all, he ought to be called the Knight of the Musical Laugh.

'I think you are speaking of Vero Drummond,' said Lord Agramont. 'I saw Harrington across the field, and as they are inseparables, putting Harrington and the laugh together, I conclude the gentleman in question to be my friend Vero. He has the qualities of a *true* knight,' he added warmly.

'What a good name!' exclaimed May, interested. 'Does he live near here?'

'We are just entering on his father's property,' returned Lord Agramont. 'We will call at the hall, and if the ice bears, ask him to accompany us on it to-morrow. They have a fine piece of water, and capital sport goes on there sometimes. I used to see more of my friends here, but since Vero has entered the army there has been no one to look me up. My dear girls must be recluses no longer,' he added, turning to Helen.

A ghost of a smile was the only reply, and they rode on as quickly as the hard roads rendered it prudent to do, until they arrived at Lawton Hall. Here they did not get off their horses; but Mrs. Drummond, who was sitting in a room from whence she

could see all arrivals, allowed her friendliness to take the place of conventional restraint, and came out to speak to them.

Mrs. Drummond was a great favourite of Lord Agramont's, and he returned her frank greeting with corresponding cordiality —commented upon the early hour he had chosen for a visit— made interested inquiries about the health of different members of her large family, and wound up by saying that he intended to take his girls to see the skating, and that he had called to ask Vero to meet them at the pool to-morrow. With a beaming look of kindness at the girls, Mrs. Drummond replied that she thought they would find Vero there at the present time, and that another time they were not to tantalize her with only a flying visit.

When they reached the water, they found Vero buckling on his skates, preparatory to joining some friends who were already on the ice; and Lord Agramont remarked, *sotto voce*, to May,

'It seems doubtful whether he was the Knight of the Merry Laugh after all;' then addressing Vero, added, 'I thought it might be you whom we saw jumping over a gate a short time since.'

Vero had overheard his remark to May, and, after raising his hat to the ladies, avowing himself to be the person he was suspected to be, came forward, and leant against Lord Agramont's horse with the easy familiarity of manner a young man is apt to adopt towards an elderly gentleman with whom he feels himself to be a favourite. He said,

'There has been such a jolly row in the market-place!—a lot of farmer chaps were down upon you for not giving stricter orders for the preservation of the foxes, and were threatening to withhold their votes. This called forth a general hissing. Some one sang out that they had just seen you pass, whereupon a lot

of fellows vociferated, "Tally ho!" at the top of their voices. This report was soon found out to be a mistake. Then came a flourish of trumpets; and what with the big sounding threats on one side, and the roar of disapprobation on the other, the racket was deafening. The best part of it was, every one was good-natured, and seemed to be exercising his lungs for the mere pleasure of the thing.'

Lord Agramont smiled and said he would go and have a look at them, and after arranging with Vero to meet them at the same place on the following day, started on the return journey.

A large evening party was to be given to the young people in the neighbourhood during May's stay at the abbey; and Miss Aberley had suggested, that if they went anywhere near the town, Helen should call on their dressmaker; and May being reminded that she would require some addition to her toilet, proposed calling on Dr. Coleridge, and asking him to be the bearer of a message to her aunt; so that when they reached the town, Lord Agramont left the girls to execute their respective commissions, while he rode about to see what was going on.

May was no stranger at Dr. Coleridge's. Very frequently when she was tired of waiting for Sir Lionel, who had a habit of lounging for an hour at a time in a print-shop, she would run in for a chat with the doctor's sister, from whom she always met with a cordial welcome.

Living with Dr. and Miss Coleridge was a young orphan lady; and as she was very talkative, and spoke an odd mixture of French and English, May found her presence there an additional attraction. On this occasion, after a hurried greeting to slow old Miss Coleridge, her first question was,

'Is Miss de Febvre at home?'

'I think she is, my dear, but I never know: she is like a comet; when you lose sight of her, you don't know when you may see her again. She busies herself about everything that goes on in the place, and is here and there and everywhere, so that she finds very little time for me; and when I do see her, she so perplexes and mystifies me as to make the *dew* start out in drops on my forehead. Poor dear! she always seems in an excitement about something, although her business seems to me to be much ado about nothing.'

'*Quand on parle du loup, on en voit la queue*,' said the subject under discussion, abruptly entering the room. Then shaking hands with May, she added, 'I have been inquiring for the carriage, but I find the doctor's taken it — it seems that William Bryant walked off with his horse quite *sans ceremonie*, and that he had no alternative—William is *master* here, that's certain, and if we don't look out he'll be master and mistress too.'

'That can scarcely be, my dear,' returned the matter-of-fact old lady; 'but he should not take it when you want it. Where has he gone?'

'To escort Sir Lionel Shelley to the railway, to be sure; where should he go?' with a flashing glance at May, adding, 'I am going for a bonnet; will you give me the benefit of your taste? If it's ever so unbecoming madame is sure to say, "*Cela vous va extrêmement bien*," and sometimes I'm soft enough to believe her.'

May expressed a doubt whether she would have time to do as she was requested, but said she would walk with her as far as Helen's dressmaker, where the groom was standing with their horses; and they set off together.

'That William Bryant is the plague of my life,' said Miss de Febvre confidentially, as soon as they had left the house. 'He

is always here when he is not anywhere else, as Paddy would say—he just takes his luncheon, then his dinner, then his tea; thinks nothing of walking up to the sideboard, and asking "if there is any wine out worth drinking." His impudence is quite unique. I believe it is his habit to eat at every house where he goes on business.'

'He must have as many mouths as some of the Indian divinities have hands,' was the laughing reply. 'I did not know he was distinguished in that way.'

'I forgot I was speaking to a particular friend of his,' returned the young lady, with a look intended to express more than she chose to put into words. 'Of course he is on his best behaviour at Scotswood.'

May made no reply. Although there was a sort of fascination for her in Miss de Febvre, she could not understand her, and in this case did not feel at all sure whether she was in fact William Bryant's friend or not. This made her uncomfortable, and seeing her friends ready to start, she gladly bade her good bye to accompany them.

They had an agreeable ride home, and the rest of the day was spent very pleasantly. May discovering that Frances and she had many tastes in common. One of their occupations was re-labelling a collection of gems and woods indigenous to India, which had been collected by Dr. Douglas, and were lately placed by Lord Agramont at the disposal of his daughters. A pleasant evening in the library followed, her host revealing various treasures for her amusement; but on retiring to her room an *un*pleasant remembrance of Miss de Febvre's manner obtruded itself on her recollection, and she asked herself why she should call Mr. Bryant her particular friend, when she knew she did not like him; and she was getting her thoughts into a perplexity

when she heard a tap at the door, and Lord Agramont calling out,

'There are some fine Auroras streaming in the north. I don't think you can see them from your room.'

Immediately opening her door, she ran down the corridor, to where a good view of the lights could be had, inquiring if Helen and Frances had been called, and finding they had not, she sent for them to come directly. She had a strong faculty for admiration, whether for a musical laugh or meteoric splendour, and at the first glimpse of the beautiful sight she said gratefully to Lord Agramont,

'Thank you so much for calling me! Isn't it lovely?' she asked, as Helen and Frances made their appearance. 'I hope Aunt Cam will not miss it.'

And she stood watching the fitfully glowing rays of rose colour and gold illuminating the dark screen of night, speculating as to how well it would be seen from the hill.

While May was thus venting her admiration and enjoyment, Helen stood mute. Why was May there first? Why was it May that sent for her? She acknowledged that her friend's enthusiasm was likely to be more attractive than her own quiet admiration, but that did not remove the grievance, and she parted but coldly from her young visitor, who, feeling her heart full of love to all the world, added thanks and expressions of delight to a warm 'good night,' and retired to rest and to sleep, thinking over the fresh pleasures that were awaiting her on the morrow, while Helen, wounded at being thus superseded by a stranger, found 'the dead of midnight' to be 'the noon of thought,' and was sleepless and unhappy. She spurned injustice even in idea, and the feeling of resentment with which she had for a moment regarded May had not the assent of either her heart or her under-

standing. A little self-introspection obliged her to confess that, while May's joyous unrestrained manner invited attention, her own had been such, that had Lord Agramont attempted to talk to her, it would have been in spite of herself; but this reflection only partially tended to allay the smart—she did not know the secret of her guardian's bachelorhood, or she might perchance have found a more satisfactory solution to the disturbing subject of thought than her own imaginary unattractiveness.

Snow fell during the night, and the next morning a sledge with silvery-toned bells and gay trappings was brought up to the door to take the girls to the pool. Lord Agramont led May from the house in so courtly a fashion as to make her feel a very small person indeed. Helen and Frances followed, and they were all wrapt up 'so delightfully warm,' as May expressed it, that there was not the slightest opening by which the frosty air could gain admission.

All being comfortably settled, they began to pass rapidly over the crisp snow; the clear air gave exhilaration to their spirits, and as the bells tinkled merrily, and added to the gaiety of the circumstances, eye and ear were on the alert to take in all the beauty that surrounded them. Every branch, leaf, and twig was laden with silvery beauty—shrub, stem, and stubble sparkling like millions of diamonds; and May exclaimed, as if the enjoyment were overpowering,

'How lovely it all is! and how well this scarlet wrap looks against the snow! I hardly know which to think the most enjoyable, Helen, your sunny lands, or the regions of perpetual frost and snow.' (Miss Aberley and Helen had been talking to her of life in India).

'The longer we live the more convinced we are that happiness is as little as possible dependent on externals,' returned

Lord Agramont. 'The Esquimaux sitting in his snow tent, carving rough figures from walrus-teeth, is far more likely to be happy in his occupation than the Indian nabob, a martyr to indolence and dyspepsia. The "something accomplished, something done" is the secret of happiness, whether it be in Iceland or in India. *Nil sine labore* should be a world-wide motto.'

'I should think they *must* want to see the sun in the winter,' ventured Frances.

'They are fully compensated when their summer does come,' returned her guardian, 'and habit does much to equalize enjoyment in all conditions of life.'

'It is something to know there is a sun somewhere, and that they will see it some day,' interposed May. 'We feel that in dull weather, and it is only a difference in the length of time. Then we are forgetting that they have those beautiful Auroras. Very likely they are to them what the sun is to us.'

'Isn't it to the Esquimaux the missionary ship goes?' asked Frances.

Helen replied in the affirmative, adding that 'it was sent out by the Moravian Brethren.'

'Who are they?' asked May.

'Brethren of the ancient Protestant Episcopal Church,' returned Lord Agramont, quoting an Act of Parliament; 'and a most estimable self-denying set of men they have proved themselves. They act as brethren should act, in their persevering endeavours to spread Christianity. A band of Christians can be traced in that part of Europe for a very great number of years. I dare say you remember that our Richard II. married a Bohemian princess, by whose means the Scriptures translated by Wycliffe were sent there. It was from the Moravian Christians that the "United Brethren," so called, sprang. For cen-

turies they were cruelly persecuted, and were hunted out of the different places where they sought shelter; but nothing intimidated them. Some of them escaped to England, and their cause was taken up by our Church, and since that time they have always received protection from the English government.'

'What interesting people!' exclaimed May. 'Tell me what you know about the ship, Frances.'

'Only that it is sent out once a year to the missionaries, laden with everything they are likely to want during the next twelve months.'

'Yes, the Brethren have a true missionary spirit,' continued Lord Agramont; 'and are zealous in propagating the truth in many distant lands, as well as in those nearer home. The ship of which our little Fan speaks is sent out every year, with provisions and supplies to those cold regions. Fancy how eagerly the missionary colony must anticipate its arrival. Life in a snow tent must be felt by them to be less luxurious than by the natives themselves, and therefore any additions to their comfort would be the more welcome.'

'How delightful to pack a great chest full of every imaginary nice thing, necessary and unnecessary!' said May: 'books and musical instruments for the grown-up people, and playthings for the children. May anybody send anything?'

'I should say that any contributions would be most welcome, but care and good judgment should be exercised in the selection. I should very much like to see a well-selected contribution dispatched annually from the United Sisters of Croyland and Scotswood, to the United Brethren in some far-off land. It would seem like doing something — wouldn't it?'

May turned to Helen, and looking very bright and thoughtful, said,

'No one could be more judicious than Aunt Cam, and she would help us. Will Miss Aberley help us too?'

'I am sure she will, as we have Lord Agramont's permission,' returned Helen, brightened also by his expression, 'Our little Fan.'

'You have not only my permission, but my co-operation if need be,' was the cordial rejoinder.

And they talked over particulars of the goods to be dispatched until they reached the pool, where they found Vero and Robert Lee (the latter the son of a gentleman farmer in the neighbourhood) awaiting them.

'My young friend here has promised to go through the "first set" with me, if, as I hope,' said Lord Agramont, with a smile at May, as he helped to disengage her from the fur-laden chariot, 'I have not forgotten my steps. I suppose I need not be as particular, as to the length of my steps, as would be necessary in drawing a line for a man's nose in a portrait; but I have one impression, — that I always had a trick of getting on too fast.'

May laughed and coloured a little, and looked very coy and pretty, at thus being brought prominently forward; and Vero saying to her that he thought they had met sometimes on the hunting-field, proceeded to buckle on her skates. He proved an excellent skating master; and the pastime was carried on with spirit, until brought to a standstill by the gathering of a large party of gazers. Vero then gallantly proposed that the ladies should re-seat themselves in the sledge, and let him and Lee be their ponies,—to this they readily assented.

Both the young men were practised at the sport, and the sledge passed easily over the ice, to the great pleasure and amusement of the girls. The air rang with their merriment,

and Lord Agramont had to remind them many times that they must be going, before Vero would consent to rid himself of his burden. At last a proposition being made that he should return with them to luncheon, the sledge was brought to a stand, and prepared for their return. When they were comfortably packed Lord Agramont thanked May for giving him a holiday, and looking at Helen and Frances, asked for the further indulgence of a song, adding that some of those he had heard occasionally from the terrace would do.

Frances gave a timid glance at Helen, whose spirits being exhilarated by air and exercise, at once proposed that they should sing Moore's 'Finland Love-song,' whereupon the sisters sang together very sweetly; and as Lord Agramont, when they arrived at the abbey, took leave of them, he said he had enjoyed himself very much indeed.

Vero appeared at luncheon, and while carefully omitting all slang expressions from his conversation, kept them highly amused with a flow of lively humour. His *gaieté de cœur* was infectious, and May readily reflected his mirthful mood. Lord Agramont found he liked the company of young people; and he told Vero as he left them, not to let it be long before they saw him again.

CHAPTER VIII.

'Do noble things, not dream them all day long,
So shalt thou make life, death, and that vast for ever
One grand, sweet song.'

ALL is stir and preparation among the *employés* at the abbey, for the doors of the grey old pile are about to be thrown open to a larger number of guests than have passed through them on any one occasion since the present lord has been its owner. Gardeners are bringing in plants and flowers for the ornamentation of the hall and staircase; gamekeepers come in laden with birds; superannuated servants are crossing the lawn from the dairy with tins of cream and butter; and the butler is in his cellar, selecting from his stores with the air of a connoisseur.

May enjoys the fun, and, under pretext of visiting some animals, makes her way to a courtyard, where she can have a full view of the kitchen offices. In that department stewing, roasting, and boiling are the order of the day. All the servants seem to feel that there is a responsibility resting on them to which they have long been unaccustomed; but they find time for a joke now and then, even in the midst of business, and May looks on, an amused spectator.

The under butler threatens one of the maids, that if she does not at once give him some silver he is waiting to polish, he will retract his promise to carry up the water for her into the cap-

tain's rooms, about which the ghost of a lady, in a silk dress and creaky boots, was said to walk. The threat is met by a pout which provokes an attempt at familiarity offensive to the indignant damsel, who, after failing to squirt some lemon-juice into the face of the offender, administers a sharp tap with the squeezers she held in her hand, thereby warning him to keep his distance. Suddenly their high tones become lowered, for Mrs. Stuart, the housekeeper, enters the kitchen, and announces that 'dinner will only be on the table for ten minutes.' Her air of solemnity drives May away, and she hastens through the rooms, where men and maids are despoiling sofas and ottomans of their sombre wrappings, and uncovering chandeliers that have not been lighted for many a day, to find Miss Aberley, and to ask if she cannot give her something to do. She is set to work to increase the number of nosegays by introducing some coloured leaves; but, finding it rather dull work to perform her task alone, goes in search of help. She finds Helen as busy at her studies as if nothing out of the usual way was being transacted in the house; but Frances, who was wondering what had become of her, gladly responded to her invitation, and was soon hard at work, while May danced about and studied effect.

In spite of all the excitement, the day seemed long. Lord Agramont kept close in his study, to be out of the way of the earthquake, or resurrection, as May facetiously called the upset, and there was no one to amuse her and Frances as they were accustomed to be amused; but as 'time and the hour runs through the longest day,' so this one came to an end, and they were reminded it was time to dress. This important ceremony performed, Helen was pronounced by both her admirers, to 'look perfectly lovely.'

'No wonder the gardener's little daughter, who caught sight of you on the corridor, took you for an angel,' laughed May, who had heard the report the child had taken to the kitchen. 'There cannot be too many white dresses, as the officers are going to wear their uniforms. I think tulle and lutestring very pretty, and you are not *too* white with these flowers and your dark hair,' she added, with fond appreciation.

Helen knew she looked well. She had been a little surprised at the effect produced, as she watched the process of dressing in the glass, but just then a friendly knock came to the door, and relieved her of the necessity of replying to May's remarks.

'For Miss Shelley,' said the messenger.

And Helen took into her hand a breast-knot of choice white flowers, which she handed to her friend, saying, with a slight tone of pique in her voice, 'I suppose Lord Agramont has sent you these?'

'I shall look like a Royston crow,' was the quick rejoinder.

'No; like that dear little bird with a black dress and white shoulders—the weaver,' suggested Frances.

May admired the flowers, but was too much in the habit of receiving such attentions to trouble herself particularly as to the sender of them, and a minute after went on speculating upon the proceedings of the evening.

'I have never seen so many people together as are to be here to-night, except at a concert at the Town Hall,' she said, meditatively. 'I wonder if people will look as they did there? I hope not as ugly. The stoutest old ladies, with the reddest faces, seemed to choose scarlet velvet turbans, with ostrich feathers, and gowns and opera cloaks to match, and *all* the head-dresses looked top-heavy. And then they carried their nosegays to look as formal as soldiers on duty, and large enough

to place on a hall table. When people get old, I think they ought to wear high dresses of black silk or black velvet, as dear old Mrs. Shelley used to do. On special occasions they *might*, perhaps, wear a grey.'

Frances smiled at May's decision, and Helen, saying that she sympathized with her in her taste for Quakers' colours for elderly people, proposed that they should go down stairs.

They met Lord Agramont in the hall. He had never seen them in anything but simple morning dress, and was evidently surprised, especially at Helen's appearance. Perhaps she observed it, and looked gratified, for he said, smilingly, as if invited by something in her manner,

'Remember, we go down the room together in — what is it they call that old country gentleman in the "Spectator"?'

Helen suggested, 'Sir Roger de Coverley,' and passed before him into the drawing-room, where Miss de Febvre was already seated.

Out of compliment to the doctor, on the occasion of any especial gathering, she received invitations to many of the great houses in the neighbourhood, and this had not been an exception. Wherever she went she made herself quite at home, and at sight of the girls, at once began a rattling talk, singling out May for a listener. At last she said,

'Of course William Bryant will be here.'

'I should think of course *not*,' returned May, looking inquiringly at Helen, who had not even heard the young man's name.

'If I had known that, I should have only felt it charitable to have begged an invitation for him,' continued Miss de Febvre. 'It would be acting on the principle of doing good to them that persecute you. He is so completely *au désespoir* at your absence from Scotswood.'

There was a twinkle in her eye May didn't like, but she asked, simply,

'Why do you talk to me of Mr. Bryant, when you know I do not like him?'

Miss de Febvre was so much older than May, that she always felt she had her in her power, and she added relentlessly,

'Gratitude ought to prevent such a confession. As your *deliverer*, he is entitled to your everlasting gratitude: *he feels* such to be the case, I assure you.'

May looked really angry, and her persecutor added,

'I see I must mind my manners, or I shall have you drawing odious comparisons between Monica de Febvre and that quintessence of propriety, Miss Douglas. I should think she never by any chance swerves from the perpendicular, does she?'

'I should think her capable of any curve within the line of beauty,' said May, colouring at the precision of her speech.

'I have got *my* answer,' returned Miss de Febvre. 'Talking of beauty, do you not think our friend William grows remarkably handsome?—such fine eyes!'

'I have never seen them,' said May, with rising anger.

'*Par example!* That means he's a sort of juvenile Shylock. How satirical you are, Miss Shelley! I find your satire quite contagious, and I have heard that it is a thing for which *l'appétit vient en mangeant*. I see I must be on my guard.'

And May moved away, saying she did not care to talk about people she didn't like. She was learning that there are other distasteful people in the world besides William Bryant. Experience was acting as a collyrium to clear her sight, and to reveal to her, that beauty, and grace, and goodness, and poetry, and sunshine, and all bright and pleasant things, have their reverse in life.

'You are walking at a fine gentlemanly pace,' said Dr. Cole-

ridge, accosting her as she crossed the room. 'Did I do my work properly the other day? Was I in time?'

'Quite and yes, thank you, Dr. Coleridge,' said May, brightening, as she remembered how vexed she was looking. 'How is Aunt Cam?'

'I don't think she is any worse. I heard that Sir Lionel did not find all in the North as well as could have been wished; but you will be sure to hear if there is anything wrong. If I see Aunt Cam before you see her, I suppose I am to tell her that I found you looking very sad and unhappy?'

A merry smile served for a reply and a farewell, and she walked down the room to Lord Agramont. Vero Drummond soon joined them, and after securing May's promise that she would dance the first dance with him, he looked as if he was ready to do anything to make those about him happy. Lord Agramont, aware of his social qualifications, asked him to make himself at home, and to do what he could to conduce to the general merriment, adding that he could quite trust him, now that the times of horsewhipping turnpike men and shutting up refractory maid-servants in cupboards had gone by.

Vero, who, although a boy in the estimation of the middle-aged gentlemen, was a young man in his own, looked up deprecatingly, whereupon Lord Agramont, discovering that he had unconsciously trodden on dangerous ground, left him and May standing together, while he went the round of the rooms. They were now quickly filling, and he wished to welcome each arrival.

May and Vero talked together for some time, and, when they became surrounded by the various guests, listened to the 'loud futilities' of one, and the jargon of art gossip from another, and watched the foppery and superlative gestures of a third, each

feeling intuitively that their opinion was shared by the other, until Vero, remembering that he was nominated master of the ceremonies, hurried away, and May then turned her attention to Lord Agramont, who was talking to Miss Aberley, complimenting her on the success of her undertaking, and expressing a hope that Mr. Harrington might look in upon them during the evening, and that their little Fan, who looked as if a zephyr might blow her away, would put something over her when she left the room. Helen overheard this expression of kind solicitude, and looked so bright, that Miss Aberley proposed she should go and 'talk to some of the quiet girls, and try to draw them out a little.'

Helen at once acted upon the suggestion. Being entirely without experience, she did not know the difficult task she had undertaken, but finding she could only elicit monosyllabic replies, soon felt very much at a loss, until Margaret Lee's kind good face invited her approach. Margaret was timid, and her placidity seemed a little unmeaning to the spirited Helen: at first she was inclined to give her up as she had done the others, but happening to light upon a subject in which Margaret was interested—the management of the singing in church—she grew animated, and they entered into a lengthy discussion.

'What can Miss Douglas be sitting there for?' asked Williametta Trelawney of Miss de Febvre. 'It must be done for effect: I 'm sure it can be for nothing else. Mr. Drummond,' addressing Vero, who was passing at the time, 'do you know who that *homely-looking* girl is?' pointing too manifestly at Margaret.

'Do you mean that as a compliment?' asked Vero.

'If it is generally considered a compliment to be remarked for our plainness,' returned Williametta, simpering.

'Judging by her fruits, I should think she is about the best

"It must be done for effect."—P. 102.

girl in the parish,' continued Vero. 'The foliage of fruit trees is seldom as ornamental as that of the less useful: perhaps that may account for Miss Lee not being to your taste.'

Williametta seemed affronted, and quite disregarding his presence, continued addressing Miss de Febvre:

'Miss Douglas adopts that haughty bearing as a blind to her real position. You know that they are kept here out of charity.'

'*I* know it will be my policy to get out of the way of acids,' said Vero, moving away. 'They are most unpleasant, not to say dishonourable weapons of war,' he added, severely.

'He does not get polish as he grows older,' remarked Williametta, pityingly. 'As a boy he was always deficient in little gentlemanly attentions, so pleasing in some boys. I remember once he positively refused to dance with me, although there was not another partner disengaged.'

'Perhaps not,' was the absent reply, for Miss de Febvre's attention was preoccupied.

Dancing soon began, and was going on with the spirit that is usual when a large party of young people enter into the pastime, Vero leading May off in triumph, when she was summoned from the room.

A few minutes after, Miss de Febvre's eyes, ears, and tongue were brought into a pleasant state of activity, speculating as to who it could be who was just then seen within the doorway; and at the same time Helen heard her own name mentioned, and went to meet May, who was evidently in search of her.

'Reginald has come to take me to dear papa: he is not well,' said May. 'Will you talk to him, while I find Lord Agramont?'

And she at once introduced her to her brother, who bore a striking resemblance to herself.

The handsome young couple furnished a mark for Monica's jokes, Reginald passing under her close scrutiny. She compared him in turn to Apollo and various demigods, while he, quite oblivious to the fact that he was under special remark, began a conversation, by asking Helen if it were usual for the abbey to wear so gay an aspect, adding that he had been accustomed to think of it as a second Newstead.

Helen replied, that the festivities were entirely in honour of May's visit; that it was the first time she had ever seen the abbey look so gay, but that the associations of the two places were to her very dissimilar.

Reginald gave her a penetrating look, not unlike to that we noticed on our first introduction to him, and then added, 'that the dissimilarity in the characters of the famous lord of Newstead and the present owner of Croyland would probably prevent the comparison.'

She looked bright, as she called to mind Lord Agramont's many virtues, but added,

'I have always been hoping to find some explanation of Byron's faults — something in the circumstances of his life, to account for the union of so many beautiful thoughts and so many wrong deeds.'

'There are certainly many parts of his writings which act as stimulants to such an inquiry as you are making,' returned Reginald; 'but I am afraid, after allowing for any misconstruction that may have been put upon his actions, we can only confess his aspirations to have been "*super-celestes*" and his manners "*soubterraines*,"—there was little that was lofty in his deeds, however lofty his impulses.'

'He was "a little damaged," as Lamb said of Coleridge,' returned Helen, regretfully; 'but I can sympathize with the

lady who wore a lock of his hair until she read his memoirs. I suppose it was only in his genius that his superiority consisted.'

'Coarseness of mind combined with such elegant literary tastes, and his habit of satirizing crime while he deliberately took part in it, are to me the most anomalous parts of his character,' continued Reginald, as if to challenge her to further discussion.

'He was famous for inveighing against the world's shortcomings,' returned Helen. 'His bitterness even extended to his dog.'

'Was it he who maligned the race by saying, that if fed by stranger hands, his dog would tear him on his return?' asked Reginald.

Helen assented.

'I am afraid we must confess that his great qualities were shrouded in gloom, while the ignoble stood out painfully prominent,' continued Reginald.

Helen could not but agree, and saying, 'that it was doubtful whether Lord Agramont knew of his arrival, and that she must go for a few last words with May,' left him to think of her as an exception to a class of young ladies who are ready to sacrifice their independence of opinion, and to agree in any popular view that may be started, while she felt it was pleasant to get a glimpse into a kindred mind, and that he had educed the exercise of her conversational powers, that had hitherto lain dormant.

He begged she would hurry his sister, lest they should miss the train; and, in a very few minutes from the time of his arrival, Lord Agramont was lifting May into a carriage, first kissing her on both cheeks, and expressing his regret that her summons to depart was irreversible. Both girls parted with her unwillingly, even though Helen felt such demonstrations as she

had just witnessed savoured of slight to herself; and May, sharing affectionately in the general sorrow, talked hopefully of future meetings and the intermediate pleasure of correspondence, while Helen noticed that Reginald's attention was fixed on what she was saying.

The next morning, when the governess and her pupils were sitting in their pleasant study, the conversation naturally turned on the unexpected departure of their lively guest. Lord Agramont had entered the room to give Miss Aberley the 'Times' newspaper, and stopped as if to read some article before unobserved by him.

'I don't know what we shall do without May,' said Frances, appreciatively. 'She is so very amusing, and tells such clever stories, all out of her head, just as if she were reading them from a book. She has given me the names of all the flowers in my herbarium. I am so sorry she has gone.'

'She certainly has the secret of winning hearts,' replied Miss Aberley, 'and her habit of inquiry, added to a retentive memory, makes her very interesting. She has a great taste for natural history, and quite set my brain to work to give her information as to the productions of India. I am glad we are all agreed in our appreciation of her.'

'*I love her*,' said the affectionate Frances. 'The day we went to Scotswood, I thought—,' but not caring to say what she had thought, she continued, 'She knows something of everything: she collects honey from everything, like the sweet Maybee she is.'

'A full-cell'd honeycomb of eloquence stored from all flowers, eh?' said Lord Agramont, as he laid his paper on the table, thus proving that although apparently engrossed, he had not been an inattentive auditor of the conversation.

CHAPTER IX.

'Is he a lamb? His skin is surely lent him,
For he's inclined as are the ravenous wolves,
Who cannot steal a shape.'

REGINALD and May did not arrive in time to see their father alive! As is frequently the case after a protracted illness, Mr. Bosanquet's death had taken place very unexpectedly; for, during the last winter of his residence abroad, he had appeared so much better as to suggest the desirability of his trying the next season in England; and the slight fluctuations that had occurred since his return were attributed rather to the change of climate than to any decided progress in his disease. But directly the cold weather fairly set in, his medical advisers were proved to be at fault, for his cough returned with so much violence as to cause the rupture of a blood-vessel, the flow from which induced such entire prostration that before his children could reach him dissolution had taken place.

Directly after the funeral, Sir Lionel was anxious to return home as speedily as possible, quieting any prickings of conscience that he might have had at running away by the comforting reflection that he could be of no use; but on Mrs. Bosan-

quet's hearing that it was his intention to take May with him, she begged to have her daughter with her a little longer. Reginald, who was present when the request was made, and observed Sir Lionel's reluctance to leave her behind, gave it as his opinion that it was his sister's duty to stay with her mother; and as Miss Bosanquet wrote, hoping that her sister-in-law might find some solace in May's companionship, and inquiring friends congratulated her on having her daughter with her at so sad a time, it would have been graceless indeed of Sir Lionel forcibly to have withdrawn her. But, although he was what is generally called a kind, he was in fact a selfish man, always carefully avoiding scenes of sorrow and suffering, and tenderly guarding himself against all depressing influences; and it was only by May's pleading her mamma's solitariness, and appealing to his love for herself, that she gained from him the admission that she was staying with his sanction. She did stay, however, until weeks grew into months. At last Sir Lionel wrote and appointed a place for her to meet him, saying that he intended taking her a long tour in Scotland before they settled again at Scotswood, and that he hoped no further obstacle would be put in the way of her doing so. Accordingly, Reginald accompanied her to the indicated place of meeting: a letter she wrote to Helen will furnish us with further particulars.

DEAR HELEN,

We have pitched our tent under the hill on the top of which Macbeth's witches are said to have boiled their cauldron. As I write I can see Birnam Wood before me. It is a lovely spot; the weather is charming, cloudlets of blue smoke are rising distinct in the clear air, and the landscape is looking its very best. The Duke of Athol's bagpipers have been entertaining us during breakfast. Doubtful as the beauty of such music generally is, it sounded very

well, falling at intervals upon the ear as they wound through the glades of the wood. They are now taking to their boats, and look very picturesque. So much here reminds me of descriptions by Sir Walter Scott. I saw a veritable Flibbertigibbet to-day at the door of a Highland hut.

If I lived in this country there might be a chance of my becoming romantic. Think of the inspiration in such names as 'The Braes of Balquhidder,' 'The Birks of Aberfeldy,' 'The Allan Waters!' And it is not only in the names that the magic and the music lie: the waters here flow in such majestic fashion—even the brooklets rush and leap, and look brisk and earnest, as if they had something to do worth the doing. They are, however, subject to fluctuations, like somebody's spirits. And then the ruins of old castles, perched picturesquely on conspicuous crags naturally induce one to re-people them according to fancy.

I should enjoy it all immensely if only Reginald were here. You will laugh when I tell you that this scenery reminds me of him—a happy blending of the grand and beautiful. He is such a delightful companion, knowing just how to put in a word in the right place to make one's own impressions of beauty palpable, without continually teasing with exclamations which with some people seem to be as unfelt as they are energetic.

An adventure happened to us just before we left Edinburgh! Our carriage was left on the 'Queen's Drive' while we walked up to Arthur's Seat; and we were standing on the top of the hill, experiencing the exhilarating effect of high ground and free breezes, when a gentleman accosted us and remarked on the beauty of the prospect. Discovering that we were strangers, he kindly pointed out objects that were familiar to him, although at the same time he gave us to understand that he had not visited the place for many years, and he then led us round to a crag, pointing out a part of the landscape opposite to that we had been viewing, which, he said, was the finest prospect to be had from the summit. After passing some laudatory remarks on the exquisite beauty of the scene, he frankly wished us 'Good morning,' directing us to a path down the hill different from that by which we had ascended. To follow his recommendation it was necessary to turn a somewhat abrupt corner, which turn brought us suddenly on two persons who were having a furious fight of words. One man was seated on a bank playing with nut-shells and a pea, while a countryman, apparently a dupe to some sort of trickery, was desperately risking his

last half-crown. The eye of the thimblerig (for we afterwards learned his profession) rolled with satisfaction as he pocketed the countryman's money; and the cunning look of the gainer, and the remorse of his victim, so engaged Sir Lionel's sympathy that he could not help remonstrating with the loser on his folly. This seemed to make the man hesitate, but he staked his watch nevertheless, looking meanwhile very excited and anxious. The conjurer continued to move his pea and nut-shells in a way to make it appear that any one with the least quickness could detect where the pea was placed, so that I felt quite eager to help the foolish fellow, who, it seemed to me, was just a subject to be imposed upon. To my great satisfaction, another stranger came forward and took the victim's part. From his neckcloth of snowy whiteness, his measured tones and regulated expression, I took him for one of Frances's 'friends,' 'a gentleman of the black cloth;' and with such an addition of moral force Sir Lionel grew more determined to see the dupe righted. 'The clergyman' at once ventured a stake for the poor man. He lost, but would try again! Alas! on searching he had nothing in his pocket—yes, there was his watch, 'a very valuable one:' 'he hardly liked to let that out of his hand,—would Sir Lionel lend him a sovereign? As he was a stranger, he would hand Sir Lionel his watch.' Sir Lionel handed him the sovereign—he won! then staked again and lost! 'Would Sir Lionel oblige him again?' The countryman was meanwhile standing by with his hat off, trying to cool his heated brow, and turned to Sir Lionel, begging him to bet for him. Just then more strangers appeared; indeed, by this time they seemed to multiply as fast as 'the rogues in buckram' who attacked Falstaff; and Sir Lionel, suspecting all was not right, refused. Upon this the countryman threw off his disguise, and gave us a torrent of frightful language, in which his comrades vigorously joined. The mysterious part of the affair was, that the *gentleman* who had so feelingly pointed out to us the beauties of the scenery, and the *benevolent divine*, were both among our foes. We were evidently in the midst of a gang of bad men, and were glad to beat a retreat as fast as we could; upon which we were followed by the whole troop, swearing and threatening us fearfully, as if they were inclined to throw us over the precipice. Sir Lionel checked my inclination to expedite my steps, thinking it more politic for us to maintain a dignified demeanour; and we soon got to a part of the route which was a little more public, whither 'the rascals' did not think proper to follow us; but it

was not until our carriage was threading the dirty wynds of Holyrood that I could rid myself of the impresson of being followed by some black spirit in the form of thimblerig, vampire, ghost, or ghoul.

Adieu for to-day. I should tell you that these dreadful men cannot be interfered with, as that part of Arthur's Seat is included in the precincts of Holyrood, which form what is called 'Sanctuary.'

Who do you think came into the hotel yesterday? Vero Drummond!—I mean my 'Knight of the Merry Laugh.' Although a mere acquaintance at home, he seemed like a friend here; and when we related our adventure, didn't he justify his *sobriquet!* He had been staying with a friend in the Highlands grouse shooting, and had himself shot fourteen and a half brace the day before. You know, for a sportsman to secure a respectable bag goes some way towards insuring Sir Lionel's favour, and they got on so capitally together that I do believe Mr. Drummond would have liked to stay with us had he not promised his young brothers and sisters to reach home that evening, to take part in some birthday festivity. He wore a kilt and philibeg, with a Glengarry cap ornamented with a sprig of heather and mountain ash; and upon Sir Lionel commenting upon his unusual attire, said he had promised the children to wear it home. He seems almost as kind a brother as Reginald!

Dear Sir Lionel is nodding in his chair, nurse is packing for a move farther north, and I am left to my own meditations, which naturally turn upon dear mamma. Her nice face seems always before me, reminding me that I ought to be with her, and, as Reginald says, a solace to her in her great grief. You would like to see him with her—he is such a darling! But his regiment is ordered abroad, and he must leave her. She is going to spend the winter with some friends in the south of Europe.

Tell Frances that I am making a collection of plants for her herbarium. Enclosed is a piece of Paris *quadrifolium* (the herb true love); it is very rare, and it is to be hoped she will prize it accordingly. Some pretty plants of maidenhair were playing 'hide in the roof' of the little Gothic chapel at Roslyn, a unique structure, and, as the guide-book says, remarkable for the variety and eccentricity of its parts. Why should the description remind me of Frances? It is joy to think I shall have two such dear friends near me at Scotswood.

Your affectionate

MAY.

A month subsequent to the dispatch of this letter May was again at Scotswood. A noticeable change had taken place in her during the few months of absence, and she seemed to have made a long step towards womanhood. But the first evening of her return found her in her old place by her aunt's sofa, with Argus stretched out in full-length complacency at her side. Miss Bosanquet was delighted to have her home again, and was lying fondling her hair, saying that she had grown so tall, that it was time she should confine it in some way, when their unrestrained attitude was disturbed by the appearance of William Bryant.

Irate at this intrusion, May did not rise, but some freemasonry seemed to take place between her and the dog; for the creature growled and showed his teeth so threateningly as to cause the young man to hesitate to come forward, and after trying coaxing and fond epithets, which only served to make the beast more furious, he was glad to beat a retreat, making a credit of necessity by saying that he would not disturb them, but would go in search of Sir Lionel.

'Is the old persecution to begin again?' asked May, thoughtfully.

'I am puzzled to discover under what pretext he makes himself so much at home,' returned Miss Bosanquet. 'The ostensible reason for his visits frequently is to interest Sir Lionel in some charity; he always seems to have some suffering brethren who engage his sympathy.'

'I shall have to claim his sympathy as a suffering sister, if Bryant torments us as he used to do,' said May.

Miss Bosanquet smiled as she looked at the bright face, which expressed anything but a sufferer's feelings; but said sympathizingly,

'I have thought lately that my cousin has appeared annoyed by his frequent visits.'

'Then why does he have him here?' said May.

This was a query Miss Bosanquet was at a loss to answer. Years ago she had asked herself the same question with reference to the visits of the young man's father, who was then in the habit of making himself more at home at the Warren than accorded with the will of its owner. His plea, too, used to be his wish to obtain Sir Lionel's aid in the furtherance of his philanthropical schemes; but as Sir Lionel always occupied a pew in the parish church, and Mr. Bryant a seat in the Roman Catholic chapel, little critical as she knew Sir Lionel to be as to creed, it had always seemed to her an anomalous fact that the two gentlemen should be identical in their charitable inclinations. The son's proceedings reminded her of the old times. She had thought lately that William Bryant's overtures had taken rather the form of a demand than a request (he was certainly a bold beggar!), and she felt that there must be some unexplained reason for his assurance. But not wishing to infect May with her misgivings, she said cheerfully, 'Do not let us talk of anything unsatisfactory to night.'

Argus lay blinking with one eye, as if expecting commendation for the service he had rendered, but May was distrait, and sat with her face towards the window seeming to watch a dense cloud that was gathering, when Miss Bosanquet, with the intention of following up the train of her musings, remarked upon the odd and whimsical shapes the smaller clouds assumed before coalescing with the heavier masses.

'There is a storm coming!' said May rising, and, opening one of the French windows, she went out upon the terrace.

A minute after some heavy rain-drops and a vivid flash of

lightning sent her speedily back into the room. Presently the fluid began to dart from all sides of the heavens, casting a lurid glare on the quickly darkening landscape; the wind was fitful and gusty, and the boding sound of the distant thunder came nearer and nearer. The effect was very grand, and May remarked as she stood watching it, 'that she thought it was quite natural for the savage to have said when he heard the thunder roar, "Me thought it was God!"'

'I can quite sympathize in the imagination,' said Miss Bosanquet. 'I too have a feeling during a storm, as if the thunder had a message for me.'

Leaving her aunt to her own meditations, May stood quietly by the window, drawing a vivid mental picture of the giving of the law on Mount Sinai, the sublimity of the scene striking her as a fit accompaniment to the revelation of the will of the Father of the universe. Her mind had become more accustomed to such thoughts since her long visit to the Old Park House, for while there she had heard the Scriptures read daily to the assembled household — Reginald acting as the priest of the family—and she had been impressed with the matter-of-course way in which he referred every questionable point of right and wrong to their teaching. 'What saith the Lord?' served him for a watchword. Until then the Bible had seemed to her an uninteresting black-letter volume which was too old-fashioned for present-day use, and contained accounts of wars and genealogies neither interesting nor useful. In her brother's hands it conveyed a very different impression — he showed it to be a guide in difficulty, a comforter in trial, and that it set forth a perfect example for the imitation of the whole world, and abounded with lovely songs of praise to the Creator of the treasures of beauty from which she had all her life derived so

much enjoyment. Her previous ignorance as to the nature of its contents arose from Sir Lionel's strongly expressed wish that the subject of religion should not be mentioned to her: he entertained the Roman Catholic notion, that the Holy Bible should be a sealed book to all but the learned, and that it was the height of folly to trouble a child with matters which sh could not understand. Miss Bosanquet had at first remon strated, but at last yielded. She knew the omission of Bible teaching to be a great fault in May's education, but felt power-less when it was a question between her will and Sir Lionel's; for, as is the case with many easy-going weak-minded people, he was very arbitrary on any point on which he once decided to have his own way. Reginald had lately given her a Bible, with a request that she would read it according to a plan he had sketched out for her, and with affectionate loyalty to his wish she had read carefully her daily portion. She was about to make her aunt a sharer in the thoughts that were passing through her mind, when the door opened to admit Sir Lionel and William Bryant; the latter of whom now showed no hesitation in enter-ing, being in the company of the master of the mansion.

Even under such protection he was not allowed to take his seat without every possible sign of disapprobation on the part of Argus, short of a violent onset; for though the creature, made nervous by the storm and trembling in every limb, had sought shelter near May, he now came boldly forward at sight of the intruder, growling, and fidgetting, and showing his teeth in a way that tickled May's fancy exceedingly; but Sir Lionel's 'Down, sir! quiet!' sent him back to his place; and there he lay, his intelligent eye fixed on May, giving a knowing blink now and then, as much as to say, 'He 's only here because we can't help it,—we 'll be on the look out.' May meanwhile

caressed him in a way which probably convinced Bryant that his affronting reception had been at her instigation; for it soon became evident that he was indulging in a little retaliatory bravado, his conversation being more than usually free and flippant, and his whole bearing such as to intimate that he could afford to set them all at defiance.

He was bragging about the rank of some of his ancestors a century removed, his petty manner seeming painfully out of harmony with the majestic roar of the elements without, when Miss Bosanquet, whose nerves were easily irritated, rose to leave the room.

'Unfortunately, we cannot live on the reputation of our ancestors as the Roman artists do;' remarked Sir Lionel facetiously, and addressing himself to Miss Bosanquet, he said, 'You are not going?'

There was something in the way the question was put that suggested, 'I do not wish you to go, or rather, I don't wish to be left alone with William Bryant;' but after the effort of rising, she felt too ill to stay, and as May rose to accompany her, she said meaningly, 'Do not let me take you away, love! You know I always prefer being alone in a storm.'

Avoiding to turn her head lest she should see the dissatisfaction she instinctively felt would be displayed on Sir Lionel's face, May still prepared to follow, and as she called Argus to go with her, Sir Lionel said, 'You won't be long, my fairy?'

'I have my presents for the servants and the cottage children to unpack, and a great many other things to do,' replied May, 'and I should like to stay with Auntie this first night.' Then remembering that she had left something she wanted on the table, she went back to near where the two gentlemen were seated.

'Have I *no* claims?' ventured Bryant.

Without vouchsafing any reply to the question, May left the room, and as she did so Sir Lionel called out, 'Say that our friend will sleep here. No one can go down the hill on such a night as this;' then nodding a farewell, he added, 'We will have a ride to the abbey to-morrow.'

'He is going to stay here to-night!' exclaimed May with irritation, as she joined her aunt. There was a scornful, indignant expression on her face, and by way of restoring her equilibrium, Miss Bosanquet said persuasively,

'You must use the trial as a means of increasing your power of forbearance, my darling.'

'It really amounts to a *trial*,' returned May, laughing.

'I should not like to see you betrayed into a want of politeness to a guest,' returned Miss Bosanquet, 'but I can sympathize in your difficulty. It requires a large amount of self-control to bear ourselves unoffendingly to one whose every expressed sentiment violates our notions of good taste and good feeling.'

'He *is* my *bête noir*,' said May with excitement, 'but I shall not mind it so much when I feel you are sympathizing with me.'

CHAPTER X.

'Do not as some ungracious pastors do,
Show me the steep and thorny way to heaven,
And recks not his own rede.'

'DO think of some reason why I should stay at home,' said May to her aunt, after breakfast the next morning. 'I would much rather not ride, as we are not to be alone. That Bryant is going with us.'

'I am afraid my judgment will only furnish me with a reason why you should go,' returned Miss Bosanquet, smiling. 'Sir Lionel has been very much interested in a new kind of saddle he has been having made for you, and he will be disappointed if you do not try it.'

'A *double* trial, then!' was May's desponding reply; but she added with more cheerfulness, 'It will be joy to see the abbey again.' And with a mixture of reluctance and satisfaction in her expression, she left the room to equip herself for her ride.

The two gentlemen met her in the hall, and Bryant was about to volunteer his aid in helping her to mount, when, without heeding his intentions, she very unceremoniously sprang into her saddle, and at once began to descant upon its merits. Sir Lionel had been anxious that she should be pleased, and was much gratified on hearing her declare that it was easier than

any she had before tried. As this new acquisition afforded both her and Sir Lionel full subject for conversation during the ride, it is likely that Bryant felt himself in the way, for when he reached the town, he intimated that he had business requiring his attention, and, promising to send back his horse to the Warren, bade them farewell.

May's spirits rose as the distance between her and her tormentor increased, and when she reached Croyland her face beamed with unclouded pleasure. Expressing her delight at the reunion, she chatted away very fast, evidently feeling she must make the most of her time, until Frances, as if guessing her thoughts, exclaimed,

'If you could only stay one night! we shall not have heard half you have to tell us.'

Miss Aberley appealed to Sir Lionel for the desired permission, and after rather an undue amount of pressing from the four ladies, his consent was obtained, together with a promise that he would send to the abbey all toilet necessaries.

Left alone with genial companionship, Mrs. Bosanquet and Reginald furnished May with an animating theme for conversation. New books, new music, and arrangements for the monster packet in the course of preparation for the mission ship, were freely discussed, and the narration of adventures of travel served to close a pleasant day, so pleasant as to excite in May a longing for permanent association with those of her own age.

The next day Lord Agramont was expected on a flying visit, and May having expressed a wish to see him, it was arranged that she should not return to Scotswood until the evening, but that after breakfast they would go for a stroll in a wood not far distant, and look at the pheasant hatching. Accordingly thither

they went, and a very pleasant walk it was. As they passed through the rides, however, and stood admiring the tiny birds darting to and fro from the hen-coops into the shade of the brushwood, the dogs on guard, not able to discriminate between friends and foes, set up a clamour that was anything but a musical or acceptable accompaniment to a woodland walk, and they were glad, therefore, to beat a retreat. But it was not easy to find a means of exit without retracing their steps, and they came to a gate which they were trying to open, when Robert Lee was seen to be passing on horseback.

Upon Miss Aberley inquiring of him the road, he gallantly dismounted and opened the gate, telling them that if they went that way they would have to cross a ploughed field that would be very trying to ladies' feet, but that if they would put themselves under his direction, he would show them another turning in the wood that would take them nearer home. Miss Aberley insisted that there was no necessity for taking him out of the way, and after clearing away sundry briers in their path, he unwillingly left them. They now found their road without difficulty, and were crossing a field opposite to the abbey gate when they came suddenly on Vero Drummond, who was stooping behind a mound, as if on watch for something. Looking surprised at seeing them in so unexpected a place, he said in a low voice, by way of apology for not moving,

'I want to assure myself that there are foxes here. I think I have discovered an "eye," but if there is a noise, the vixen will be too wary to show herself.'

All kept quiet, Vero alone lifting his head to watch. Presently he heard a sharp bark, that he knew to be the mother's warning to her young to keep where they were; and thus satisfied he at once accompanied the girls, explaining that 'the dis-

covery was of particular interest just then, and that if he had moved when he had seen them his object would have been defeated. His radiant, winning manner was so acceptable as to render all apology unnecessary, and May was quite ready with a response, as he inquired after Sir Lionel and alluded with interest to the meeting they had had in Scotland. Various subjects were discussed until the merry party arrived at the park entrance, when Vero, seeing a carriage on the way to the abbey, lifted his hat and left them.

Lord Agramont was the occupant of the carriage, and on discovering May to be the companion of his girls, he invited her to ride with him to the house. By no means unwilling, she did as he desired, when he plied her with questions on family matters, such as one would have supposed to have been without interest to a comparative stranger, and on arriving at the house, declared his intention of taking luncheon with the ladies. Miss Aberley suggested that it might be as well that the horses should not be taken from the carriage, as she had promised May should return to Scotswood early; but he would not hear of anything of the sort, and insisted upon her prolonging her visit, saying that 'he would make all right with Sir Lionel.' When they were seated at luncheon, Vero again made his appearance. He was all in a glow with excitement, and called their attention to two bright eyes and a pair of large ears that he made to peep from under his coat tails, further exhibiting a little fox-cub by putting it on the floor for their inspection. It was a scared, awkward-looking thing—head and ears out of proportion to its body; but though decidedly out of its element, it walked round the table with great composedness and deliberation of demeanour, as if quite satisfied with itself.

'I think the vixen must have dropped it on her way to the

wood,' said Vero, as he watched its movements. 'She was obliged to go there for food, no doubt, and so thought it as well to remove her litter there from the chalk-pit. There will be the best chance of her finding it, if we take it to its old home. We can't afford to lose one. It will be jolly fun, and will funk the fellows nicely to find that after all they have been out in their reckoning. I shall take care it gets food, until the mother finds it. It is very much draggled, poor beast.'

'It is to be hoped it won't repay you for your trouble by making a meal of you,' said May. 'At Scotswood some young foxes were given to a cat to nurse, and when they grew up they killed her—by way of showing their gratitude, I suppose.'

'Such an instance makes one nervous,' said Vero, looking interestedly at the merry girl. 'I shall have to look out. I intend to smooth the ground all round the eye,' he said, turning to Lord Agramont; 'then they will see the print of her pads, and have an undoubted proof that there are foxes.—I am forgetting a message from my mother,' he added, as he was leaving the room. 'She hopes the ladies will take part in the archery to-morrow.'

Miss Aberley exchanged glances with Lord Agramont, and the latter remarked,

'We shall be glad to try our skill, at least I may answer for *one*,' he added, turning to May.

And when in due time May joined the party assembled in the grounds of Lawton Hall, she did look ready for anything in the way of sport. For a time she amused herself by watching the various groups, and listening to their superlative expressions, quietly criticising the bridling, and blushing, and fidgetting, and flirting that was going on among them; until Vero made his way to her side, and began to arrange her

archery equipments, as if she above all present was to be his especial care.

'I am wanting to introduce you to my eldest sister,' he said, looking round as if in search for her; 'but the present day fashion of church-going makes her so very difficult of access. English people are staunch *Papalinis*, after all,' he added, suggestively: 'the only difference between Roman Catholics and Protestants in this respect is, that instead of Protestants having *one* Pope, as they do in Rome, each congregation of church people has its own particular Pope.'

'What *are* you saying?' asked his sister, coming up to where they were standing, and looking bright and pleased, as she shook hands with May.

'That English people think just as much of their parsons as Roman Catholics do of their Pope.'

'At least it speaks well for their taste,' returned Gertrude, 'supposing it to be to the high principles they preach that they yield their homage.'

'Why not do some of the praying that takes up so much of your time by machinery, as the followers of the Grand Lama do theirs?' pursued Vero: 'it must resolve into a mere mechanical process. You have been once to church to-day before.'

'Aunt particularly wished me to go with her, or I should have been away this afternoon,' returned Gertrude. 'I'm sorry I'm late,' she added, apologetically.

'Don't talk of church-going with Aunt Dunlop,' groaned Vero. 'The mere mention of it causes a shock to my system, which would be as well avoided. When I was a boy,' he continued, addressing May, 'I suppose I had a superabundance of vitality, or perhaps a spirit of contrariety, or perhaps both; at all events I have a vivid impression of this aunt aforesaid, sitting mathe-

matically upright, and trying to stare me into sitting still, in a way that now reminds me of a celebrated Russian autocrat, who set some glaring-eyed Cossacks to stare at his prisoners by way of punishing them. If I moved the breadth of a barley-corn, she would look electrified, that is, violently shocked, and as was but natural, I found it an excitement to subject her to repeated convulsions.'

'She should have made you sit on a monk's *miserere* seat,' suggested May, laughing, 'so that if you bent your knee it would go down with a run.'

'No doubt he deserved punishment then, as he deserves it still,' exclaimed Gertrude. 'He is speaking of our great-aunt: she *is* a little austere, but as he was her especial favourite, it is not fair of him to be too severe upon her.'

'You may well say *was* her especial favourite,' returned Vero, 'for she has never forgiven me for preferring a corslet to a crosier; and, considering the example I had before me, her indignation was decidedly misplaced.' He alluded to their miserly old rector, whose favourite themes in the pulpit were humility and liberality—two virtues in which he was strikingly deficient.

'You know he is an unhappy exception,' returned Gertrude. 'It would be easy to find a pleasant reverse.'

'How about those reverend brethren on the Clyde steamer that were coming from the Synod at Argyll?' he mischievously suggested.

In spite of wishing to put a stop to the subject, Gertrude could not help laughing, and Vero continued,

'When Gertie and I were in Scotland we were travelling on a steamboat with a poor widow and a large party of children, who had a well filled prog-basket, and some of your reverend

gentlemen were also on board. One of them addressed her, and, as he was bound to do in virtue of his office, volunteered little spiritual consolation. By way of appreciation of these "crumbs of comfort," she offered him a share of some substantial slices of bread and meat with which her basket was partly filled, and of which, after a little assumed hesitation, he condescended to partake. Seeing the widow look gratified, he increased her obligation still further by handing her basket round to his brethren, when, to the amazement no less than the consternation of the appetized party, it was returned to her quite empty.'

May here made the air ring with laughter, and Vero added, seriously,

'It is difficult to draw a picture that will do justice to the scene, but I assure you the gaping children and the abashed widow would have made a grand study for an artist.'

'Your brain has certainly gone on a roving commission to hunt up all the parsons that have ever been caught tripping,' interrupted Gertrude. 'Can't you think of some of the good ones?'

'Every rule has some exceptions,' said May, laughingly. 'I remember Sir Lionel saying that, bad as the Publicans generally were, there was an exception even in their case, — that there was an image erected in Rome with a superscription, "For the faithful Publican."'

'Talking of reverses, I asked Harrington to come in this afternoon,' said Vero. 'I met him looking fagged to death. He seemed to be brimfull of sympathy, talking with an old woman who most likely had mistaken a rheumatic pain for a religious emotion. I believe he is humbugged right and left.'

Vero's fun was irresistible when he was in a facetious mood,

so faithfully did voice and gesture second the impression his words were intended to convey.

Gertrude felt that in his then mood it was useless to oppose him, and walked away, May at the same time remarking,

'You seem to be a second Robin Hood in your warfare against monks and friars.'

'"Then thy bowe, thy arrows, and little horne, now with me I will beare,"' he replied, quoting from an old ballad; and he took up her weapons, and carried them to the spot where the archers were assembling.

He was making use of May's tassel to brighten the point of her arrows, when Miss de Febvre came up to them, and addressed May with much show of interest and affection, putting questions that she instinctively felt to be impertinent; upon which she turned the conversation by asking Vero the name of a party of dressy girls, who struck her as vulgarly self-asserting. 'Those girls in the foreground,' she explained.

'Putting themselves forward?' volunteered Miss de Febvre: 'all eyes, like that peacock's tail?' (pointing to a bird that was strutting about in the distance). 'They are the Trelawneys.'

May looked curious, her thoughts recurring to the account her governess used to give of them in days that now seemed to her long gone by.

'That old fellow staring at the crows and playing with his forelock is their father,' continued Miss de Febvre, pointing unscrupulously to the subject of her remark. 'If you go and ask him how he is, most likely he'll tell you he's going to the workhouse fast, or that he is making a sacrifice to his principles by eating off pewter for economy.'

Vero laughed, and Miss de Febvre, determining that May should laugh too, continued,

'I 'm not joking, I assure you. When her ladyship is away the whole family feed upon rabbits, to the great disgust of the gamekeepers. By-the-bye, what a supply of rabbits William Bryant brings from Scotswood!' she added, addressing May, watching the effect of her words on Vero. 'I suppose he feels quite at liberty to do so; but sometimes I 've thought your gamekeepers might complain.'

'I suppose there are sufficient at the Warren for everybody,' returned May simply.

'Trelawney *looks* like a miser,' continued Miss de Febvre, perseveringly, for she felt it humiliating to be treated with such marked reserve by so young a girl. 'Some say he 's as rich as Crœsus.'

'There are so many people reputed to be as rich as Crœsus, but I never heard at what figure his riches were estimated,' interposed Vero.

A serious expression had come over May's face, for she was thinking that she liked Miss de Febvre less and less. She remembered having heard her mamma say that she considered those who made 'people' the constant subject of their conversation had the lowest style of minds, and she had never heard Miss de Febvre talk of anything else. Perhaps her reflective look attracted kind Mrs. Drummond's interest, for while she was thus meditating, that lady came up to her with her little twin girls, Constance and Isabel, and invited her to go with her to look at some flower-beds which she considered to be then quite in perfection.

The little girls also seemed to be attracted by May's face, for they at once placed themselves on each side of her, and by degrees insinuated their little hands into hers. Then Lord Agramont joined them, and May was looking very animated

and happy, when Vero came to remind her that she could not be spared any longer—that the sport was about to begin; and a few minutes after she was eagerly at play, her face sparkling, and looking as interested as if some great stake were at issue.

After the archery was over, Vero escorted her party to their carriage, and asked the girls if they would be present at the hustings the following day, and on May saying she should like to see an election, Lord Agramont said they should all be taken there.

And she did go in grand state, in the first of a long train of carriages and equestrians, with colours flying, and welcomes and *vivas* resounding on all sides. Arrived at the place of meeting, she recognized among the members a hunting-field acquaintance of Sir Lionel's, who, although not a professed Roman Catholic, was known to be a mover in anything that would advance the Romanist cause. He did not bear a good private character, and was by no means popular, and she heard it made a subject of comment that a good many of the people present wore his colours. Whispers of bribery and corruption were rife, however, and when he rose to speak, hissing commenced, and taunts and groans of clamorous disapproval rendered his attempt to do so ineffectual.

'Where did you get your votes?'—'From his poor tenants behind with their rents!' 'Doesn't he put the screw on?' were the sort of questions and answers that succeeded in overpowering him.

Lord Agramont then rose, and was met by cries of 'Here comes Agramont! We'll take it out of Agramont.' After facetiously replying to a man who pointed out to him a *standing* place, that he should be content with nothing short of a *seat*, and a playful allusion to the foxes, he commenced his speech,

which, although it met with its share of opposition, was listened to with tolerable moderation, and the clamour gradually subsided. Every one knew him to be inaccessible to unfair influences, and awarded him respect in consequence. Vero stood on the steps of the carriage in which the girls were seated, and kept them highly amused with his drollery; and so long as Lord Agramont was on his legs, nothing transpired of a particularly exciting nature; but after he had finished, the first speaker tried again, hoping to meet with better success, but his attempts were met with, 'He promises to be a better bairn!' 'Vindicate your votes!' 'Give him some political medicine to eradicate Popery from his constitution!' He still persevered, however, but, upon a low man climbing to the top of a pole and addressing the speaker in language too bad to be repeated, he gave up further attempts, and Lord Agramont rose to say that there must be an end to all proceedings until the sheriff ordered the man down from the pole. This was looked upon as generosity to an adversary, and hurrahs resounded through the crowd. These, mingled with continued shouts of vengeance and hissing, cries of 'Bribery!' and 'Bring him to book!' created so great a hubbub as to cause a wish on the part of the girls to retire; and, tired and excited, they soon exchanged the noise of the hustings for the quiet of the abbey. On their arrival May found a letter from her mamma, enclosed in a note from her aunt, to say that a carriage would be sent for her on the morrow, and that she had better return, for that Sir Lionel appeared to be poorly and out of spirits, and would be glad to see her again.

'I saw him looking very so-so and shaken,' remarked Lord Agramont to Miss Aberley, when the note was read.

'Where's May?' asked Helen of Frances during the evening.

'Curled up like a kitten in the great arm-chair in Lord

Agramont's study. I think she was reading to him,' was the reply.

May soon after joined them, but, instead of sitting down with Helen and Miss Aberley, went off with Frances to some distant part of the house; and in a few minutes afterwards, Lord Agramont half-opened the door, and called out, as if in a hurry,

'Will one of you spare a few minutes to call over some names with me? I want a check.'

'*I* shan't go,' said Helen decidedly. Her words seemed to echo with painful distinctness; and, after the door closed, she added, perhaps by way of qualifying them, 'He does not want *me*.'

'I hope you *will* go, and *directly*,' returned Miss Aberley, much distressed, for she felt sure her rude speech must have been overheard; 'if not, I must at once seek May. I hope he did not hear you.'

It was evident Helen did not intend to go, and Miss Aberley went at once in search of the two girls. From her childhood it had been Helen's habit to think of Lord Agramont with affectionate reverence, and, upon reflection, she too hoped he had not heard her; but the next morning he opened the door of the room where they were sitting, and called *May* and *Frances* to go out with him. Helen looked up to see if she were included in the invitation, but a solemn grave look on his usually kind face told her that the omission was intentional. The two younger girls gladly responded to his call, and she was left alone to confront the consequences of her petulance.

CHAPTER XI.

'For to be wroth with those we love,
Doth work like madness in the brain.'

COULD Helen have been aware of the utter misery that one little ebullition of pride would have occasioned her, she would gladly have undergone much self-inflicted pain to have been saved it. With Lord Agramont's displeasure resting upon her, she felt entirely disqualified for her usual pursuits, and unable to do anything but morbidly dwell upon her offence and its result. In spite of the coldness of manner she exhibited, and the rude speech which had served as its climax, she loved Lord Agramont with the devotion a girl is apt to feel towards one whom her imagination has painted free from the weaknesses to which, in some form or other, every mortal is subject, and endowed with such high and heroic virtues as those with which she would invest her hero. Lord Agramont was remarkably prepossessing in appearance, a genial, cheerful expression counteracting the hauteur the cast of his features might at first suggest; his general bearing easy and graceful, but such as enabled him to resist any unharmonious intrusion without effort. May, who was always on the look out for heroes, at once remarked him as affording a goodly type of an English gentleman, and Helen had, with the many

testimonies to his excellence that she had heard from her childhood upwards, together with such as her own observation could furnish, constructed a character to which she could yield her reverence.

Sometimes she had thought that he might exercise his benevolence a little more on her behalf; but the thought was invariably followed by the remembrance of times of sickness during which he had proved himself anything but deficient even in tenderness to her; and at the present time such occasions stood out before her in vexatious prominence.

It was this delicate phase of the affair that prevented her making any one else a confidante in her trouble, for she knew they would not understand all her cause for grief; and, genuinely repentant though she was, there seemed no help for the distress: had it been a father she had offended, she could have gone to him at once, poured out her sorrow and her penitence, and by increased guardedness have shown her contrition to be sincere; but with Lord Agramont she did not feel herself at liberty to act on the supposition that he had even noticed her rudeness. As she dwelt upon her offence, it seemed to become intensified in blackness, and waiting in inaction, without attempting to convince him of the real nature of her feelings, was almost more than she could bear. *She* knew that her answer had been prompted by no worse feeling than one of pique, but she knew also that to Lord Agramont's mind there would be no palliating circumstances, but that his verdict would necessarily be—that she was not only incapable of feeling, but unpardonably impertinent.

Quite exhausted in spirit, she went listlessly to her own room, and falling upon her elbows on her bed, tears of heart-wrung grief rose to her eyes. By degrees she sank upon her knees,

and if lifting up the soul to a superior power for sympathy and aid be praying, she prayed: the attitude both of body and mind said, 'God, thou knowest!' Then remembering that to avoid remark it would be necessary to go down to see May off, she applied what means lay in her power to efface her emotion, and made her way down to the study.

A very few minutes afterwards the two girls returned, and May burst into the room, light-heartedly exclaiming,

'We have had such a delicious walk! Why didn't you come? I wonder Lord Agramont didn't ask for you!' she added, as if the thought had only just occurred to her.

This tone of careless hilarity was anything but in harmony with Helen's feelings, and instead of replying, she looked as if she were puzzling over some abstruse passage in her lesson, and would rather not be interrupted.

'Cannot the books wait five minutes, until the carriage comes?' continued May, coaxingly. 'It is so horrid to go—I always have such an enjoyable time here! *You ought*, now, to come and stay at Scotswood, and indeed *you must*. I know Aunt Cam would very much like to have you. The only drawback to my having friends is her being so ill; but she isn't in the least a marplot, and Sir Lionel will do just what we like. You would have different rides, and we would have some sort of fun.'

Helen did not look up to fun just then, but smiled her thanks and acquiescence; and when the carriage was announced, and May clung to her warmly for a last embrace, she tried to be responsive, but evidently failed, for on loosing her hold, May regarded her with a searching, disappointed look of inquiry.

Frances observed it, and, after seeing her to the carriage, whither Helen would not follow for fear of encountering a cold

look from Lord Agramont, took her books and sat down by her sister's side quietly, waiting for something to lead the way to an explanation of her manner; but Helen was not talkative, and Frances, thinking she looked unusually pale, said, 'Are you not well, Helen?'

'Not quite!' was the curt reply. 'After you have finished your lessons we will go for a walk,' she was going to add, 'that may do me good;' but knowing her malady to be less easily curable, hesitated.

Frances applied herself so diligently to her work, that she soon went to prepare for her stroll, thinking that she should then surely learn what ailed her sister; but no sooner had they started than Helen dexterously turned the conversation from herself, by speculating on the probable supply of wild fruits available for the cottagers' show; and Frances was soon interestedly collecting leaves of bright colours, varying through the gradations in shades of orange, tawney, and scarlet, and studying an arrangement for the benefit of her humble friends. She had run forward a few paces to secure some of the scarlet berries of the arum, thinking that their coral-like beads would form pretty handles for the baskets, when Helen saw a carriage in the distance, and supposing Lord Agramont to be its occupant, her first impulse was to retreat from view; but, no, she would stand where he must see her, and if he should recognize her ever so faintly, she would show him how glad she was, and perhaps he would accept her manner as an apology. Her attitude both of mind and body struck her as contrasting strangely with her natural pride of disposition, for she was feeling as if the slightest notice would be received with gratitude; but she was learning for the first time, that the equanimity with which she could bear coldness depended entirely on the

quarter from whence it came. At last the carriage passed within a few paces of her standing-place, and she looked up eagerly for some sign — some token — one glance to light on her; but although it was evident that Lord Agramont saw her, it was as evident that his eyes were intentionally averted, and that he meant her to feel his displeasure.

And she did feel it, more keenly perhaps than he would have wished! In the first agony of repulse, her heart seemed to stand still, and the blood which had been arrested in its usual flow suddenly to congeal; her lip quivered, her whole frame shivered, and she sat down, simply because she could not stand. These feelings were experienced in a shorter time than it takes to write them; and when Frances came up to her, she was able to choke down her emotion sufficiently to avert questioning, by inviting her to sit down by her side. The weakness that often succeeds pain mental, no less than pain physical, inclined her to rest; but Frances, thinking she had chosen an odd place for a seat, looked to her for an explanation, when, seeing her colourless face, she exclaimed,

'You must be very ill, Helen! I 'm sure you are. Let me go for Miss Aberley.'

Helen assured her that the pain was only momentary—that she was better already; and, managing to get up a ghost of a laugh, added, 'I would rather you did not say anything about it.'

This was enough to insure Frances' silence; and as Helen rose and walked home as usual, her anxiety was for the time pacified.

In the afternoon of each day it had been Helen's custom to practise the harp or piano for an hour or two; but this afternoon, feeling nerveless and unstrung, as if each note she touched would jar discordantly and out of harmony with her mood, she

seated herself at her easel instead. Miss Aberley observed the change, but for some time made no remark; until, finding the time rapidly passing away, she inquired the reason for the omission, adding, 'That, except for some good reason, she did not like her to give up old rules.'

Every-day occurrences seemed so very unimportant to Helen in her disquieted state of mind, that she felt irritated at so trifling a deviation from rule being thought worthy of remark, and replied more curtly than amicably, that she *preferred* to draw.

'Have you prepared for Mr. Harrington?' persisted the governess, who knew that May's visit had interfered with their usual arrangements.

Helen did not vouchsafe an audible reply, but took an early opportunity of leaving the room.

Why was she so unlike herself? Why had she not jumped up directly Lord Agramont called her? Why this disregard of rules?

Miss Aberley was no less puzzled than vexed.

While she was speculating on this inexplicable conduct, Helen was standing looking absently out of the window of her room, trying to conceive some plan by which to prove that, however much appearances were against her, she was not so defective in love and gratitude as she had seemed. At first she thought she would write, and sat down with a scrap of paper and pencil in her hand for the purpose. The wording would be difficult—she could not write it off at once; but, upon reflection, she determined that she would not write at all—that the whole matter, weighty as it seemed to her, resolved into the fact that she did not reply to a vague request from Lord Agramont that *some one* would go and help him, and that he had passed

down the avenue without turning his head to see if she were standing near. If she were to write, and he should wade through her letter, wondering what she was making all that fuss about, how mortifying it would be! And she gave up that project as impracticable. Yet her heart would remind her that her best friend had been offended, perhaps wounded by her; and, in spite of her specious reasoning, the fact forced itself miserably upon her, that the subject of disquietude remained precisely as it was before, and the question, 'What am I to do?' wrung from an irrepressible feeling of anxiety, appeared to her a most perplexing one to answer.

'Mr. Harrington, Miss,' said a servant, knocking at her door.

'Tell Miss Frances to go to him,' was the reply.

Soon after, she made her appearance in the library, wearing an aspect as calm externally as if there had been no deviation in her experience from the ordinary course of things; but when Mr. Harrington rose to place a chair for her, she said to him, *sotto voce*,

'You will excuse my not being prepared for you to-day.'

Satisfied that there was reason for so unusual a request, so accustomed was he to find every exercise carefully prepared and his pupil eager for fresh knowledge, he turned at once without remark to a study which he knew had a special interest for her, and exerted himself even more than was his wont to make his teaching acceptable.

After he had finished with her, he lingered talking with Miss Aberley on topics of general interest; and, as her heart was not at leisure for anything of ordinary import until she had devised some plan to seek the forgiveness so much desired, she again adjourned to her own room.

Her window overlooked the path visitors usually took upon

leaving the abbey, and she had been standing by it a full half-hour in troubled reverie, when she saw Mr. Harrington going away. At a distance from the house he stopped and raised his hat, and leaning forward to discover for whom the recognition was intended, she saw her governess standing before the house reading a letter, which, from the paper, she knew to be from India.

Under ordinary circumstances she would have joined her and shared the news thus communicated, but, conscious of having been *extraordinarily* unamiable, and her own affairs weighing heavily on her mind, she stayed where she was. She remembered that Lord Agramont left for London the next day, and, as he always took his meals alone, that there would be little chance of her seeing him in the intermediate time. What if he should go away without giving her one glance of reconciliation, and she should have to pass week after week in her present state of uneasiness? There was one hope for her—she might see him as he passed through the hall. Hailing the possibility with eagerness, she cast about as to the plan she would pursue, and decided that if she could meet him on the way from his room to his carriage, she might be able to give him his hat or umbrella, or perform some little service generally rendered by a servant. This might be accepted as an act of contrition. There is an accent in deeds as well as in words.

This hopeful possibility caused a reaction in her spirits, and she went down to tea, looking more like herself than she had done since her lips let fall that unfortunate sentence. Her manner was so altered, that Frances, in her joy, forgot the prohibition she had received, and expressed her satisfaction at seeing her looking well again.

'Have you been unwell?' asked Miss Aberley, looking up

as if she hoped no indication of sickness had escaped her notice.

'Frances said I did not look well,' was the evasive reply. 'Did I not see you with an Indian letter?'

'You did,' replied Miss Aberley, 'and one containing very exciting matter. My brother has just lost his third little girl, and urges me to go out at once, and bring the other children to England for education. It is a sad trial to him, losing his children just as they get at an interesting age.'

'How can you?' asked Frances, anxiously.

'Now that you are no longer children, you could spare me for awhile,' returned Miss Aberley. 'Another governess might even be an advantage to you.'

And she looked observantly at Helen, feeling, perhaps, that the announcement might serve as a punishment to her for her *brusquerie.*

Helen changed colour, and Frances' eyes brimmed full of tears.

'The time of my going will depend on friends under whose escort it is proposed I shall travel,' said Miss Aberley, taking Frances on her knee. 'If all be well, I shall be back almost before you have had time to miss me. It is possible that the time of my going may be delayed, so that I shall not trouble Lord Agramont with the news until I hear further particulars.'

Both girls had a great regard for their governess, and Helen expressed so much concern at the prospect of parting with her, even for a time, that knowing, from previous experience of her character, that her regret was genuine, she at once forgave the gracelessness of manner that had lately so excited her displeasure, and entered into friendly discussion with her as to what would most conduce to their pleasure during the proposed ab-

sence. Many plans passed under review, but the one that recommended itself the most to Helen's taste was, that they should go to Paris for the time. She was naturally enterprising, and ready to face whatever might befall in novel circumstances, and at once caught at a plan that would enable her to see something of life beyond the abbey park railings, as she expressed it; and Frances thought that it would not seem quite so bad as having any one else to fill Miss Aberley's place.

The daughters of some old Indian friends of Miss Aberley's had spoken highly to her of a Madame de Bernonville, who resided in Paris, and received a few young ladies to educate, so that their plan did not seem altogether impracticable or undesirable, and supplied a topic for animadversion and discussion.

This counter-excitement kept Helen from being entirely absorbed in her one cause of grief, and for a time she lost sight of that which had occupied her thoughts during the last twenty-four hours; but directly she was alone again, she began to speculate as to the probable result of the impending interview, and even during her prayers — she repeated the same form she had been taught when a child—she found herself holding an ideal conversation with Lord Agramont.

Although ignorant as to the nature of true religion, and quite unable to apply its obligations or consolations to every-day circumstances, she was shocked at her want of reverence, and went wearily and dissatisfied to bed, to awake early the next morning with a remembrance of the ordeal through which she had to pass, vividly before her.

After deciding on what was best to be done, she was not of a character to waver, and she went down to breakfast stern in her resolution to carry out her project of the day before. Any one watching her quiet face, bending over her book apparently ab-

stracted in its perusal, would not have guessed at the tumult of feeling going on within, or that there was any weighty reason why she cast those hasty glances to the clock on the mantelpiece.

At the time appointed, she rose from the table, and quietly leaving the room, went for a pair of garden scissors, then stationed herself in the hall, and occupied herself cutting off some dead blossoms from the plants which stood there, buoying herself up with the hope that a few minutes hence she would be free of the care that was so weighing her down.

Her ear soon caught the sound of footsteps in Lord Agramont's room. How strangely powerless she felt! The scissors seemed about to slip from her hold without any power on her part to control them. She had never felt such excitement before, and felt at a loss to account for the unusual symptoms.

Rousing herself with an effort, uncertain whether without it speech would come at command, she looked eagerly towards the opening door, but it was soon evident that Lord Agramont was not alone. Three gentlemen passed out—then Lord Agramont! She heard one of them exclaim, 'It is a most unscrupulous case of bribery: Shelley supplied the funds to the amount of two thousand pounds, but the Bryants have been the agents.' So preoccupied were they that they did not even observe the waiting figure stationed in the hall.

CHAPTER XII.

'Peace, sister! be not over-exquisite
To cast the fashion of uncertain evils.'

IT is *not* one of Miss Bosanquet's 'good days,' and unhappily her malady is more mental than physical. She is sadly missing the kind old friend who had for so many years shared her sorrows and anxieties, and is lying on a sofa in her bed-room, a prey to sad forebodings. True, her cause of distress is at present only an obscure phantom; but it assumes a very real appearance in her mind, and a dark distrust of the future oppresses her. Yesterday she heard a strife of words between Bryant and Sir Lionel, and her affectionate ear had detected in them a tone of intimidation on the part of the younger man towards the elder, that, considering their relative positions, especially struck her as strangely inconsistent. She knew her cousin to be reprehensibly weak, and pitifully deficient in those stern qualities which ward off the influence of evil; and the thought naturally presented itself to her, 'could he have compromised himself in any way, and the young man conceived some traitorous design for the purpose of extorting money?' The last suspicion had been aroused from having observed the cupidity displayed in Bryant's transactions

with Sir Lionel. But perhaps she was indulging in surmises no less uncharitable than unfounded: she would not judge, but wait for her conjecture to be satisfied.

Meanwhile May was wondering that her aunt did not come down stairs, and stood in front of the house observing the broad sweep of hill and valley, woodland and river, with the eye of a connoisseur. Scotswood looked well in russet livery: the autumn colouring was very rich, and her practised eye could appreciate its most delicate touches. A day of enjoyment seemed to be before her! She had some gifts to distribute to Dame Froggatt's grandchildren, and was to ride to the town with Sir Lionel in order to make purchases for the mission ship, and numberless other pleasant home occupations were awaiting her; there was exercise for body and mind suitable to her constitutional energy, so that the programme of the day was satisfactory; but it had not far advanced before she had other events to chronicle than those already arranged, and experimentally to learn that 'we know not what a day may bring forth.'

The fragrance of a splendid magnolia blossom directing her to its hiding-place, high up beyond her reach, she went into the grapery to get a pair of steps, by the aid of which she thought she might reach it, and have the pleasure of putting it on her aunt's table to welcome her on coming down stairs, when a sharp report startled her. She did not see Sir Lionel take a gun out with him: was Mr. Bryant here again, justifying Miss de Febvre's supposition that he must keep half the town supplied with rabbits? There was not long to wait for an answer to her queries, for shortly after she saw Sir Lionel hurrying across the lawn, breathless and without his hat, with a face deathlike in its paleness.

'Call some of the men,' he exclaimed anxiously. 'I have

shot him—perhaps killed him!' and after uttering the dreadful words, his senses seemed to fail him, and he leaned against a tree for support.

'Do you mean William Bryant?' asked May nervously; and Sir Lionel acquiescing, she ran to the house, called the servants, and sent for Dr. Coleridge.

A large party soon followed to the scene of the accident, where they found the young man writhing piteously as if in great pain.

Aghast at the spectacle, May's face spoke her commiseration, upon detecting which Bryant made a face of appeal for sympathy that struck her as irresistibly comic.

Sir Lionel's valet, Vincent, also observed the look, and, deducing from it that the young man had not lost consciousness, said authoritatively,

'Try to get up, sir; it is 'stonishin' what an effort will do sometimes. Lean heavy on me,' he added, at the same time trying to help him to rise.

The movement appeared to have done mischief, for blood made its way through the coat sleeve; at the sight of which Sir Lionel, in a voice trembling with concern, cautioned him 'that he had better lie where he was until Dr. Coleridge arrived.'

'It's my belief it's little more than a graze, sir,' returned Vincent, confidently. 'It would not hurt him to get up and walk to the house;' an impatient gesture showing that he felt more ado was being made than circumstances justified.

Servants are apt sometimes to think it a trespass on their dignity to be called upon to serve the guests of their employers, if such guests happen to be of an inferior rank to those they are hired to attend, and it was especially so in the case of Mr. Bryant. May heard them whispering,

'I hope he's not going to play old soldier here. I'll bet he could get up if he liked! These smooth-spoken mealy-mouthed chaps are always after something, and I always have said, I have, that he looked as if butter wouldn't melt in his mouth. He's shamming, or I'm not my mother's son.'

May felt she ought to make it a conscience to discredit such a conjecture as these remarks suggested; but, as we have seen, she had had reason to doubt Bryant's veracity from a very early period of their acquaintance, and regulating her judgment of the case by former experiences, she allowed herself to hope that he was not so much damaged as he appeared, and linking her arm affectionately in that of Sir Lionel, made him the sharer of the hope, and at the same time inquired the cause of the accident.

It seemed that Sir Lionel had strolled out after breakfast without any particular aim, and that, finding William Bryant rabbit shooting, he had sent for his gun to join in the sport; that it had been agreed between them that the younger gentleman should keep to one side of a circular mound until the report of Sir Lionel's gun should give notice of the absence of danger; but that, instead of observing the signal agreed upon, Bryant had incautiously rounded the hillock, and received in his arm some shot that was intended to do execution elsewhere.

May said she had better go and tell her aunt, in case a distorted account of the accident should reach her; and Sir Lionel desired her to give orders that one of the pleasantest rooms should be prepared, and stimulants at hand ready for use in case they should be wanted on the arrival of the doctor.

She performed her errand carefully and cleverly, and sat down by her aunt waiting for Dr. Coleridge.

'It is strange, but I've had a presentiment of coming evil,' said Miss Bosanquet, dejectedly. 'I doubt, however, whether it

is wise to infect you with my anxieties; but you are not a child now,' she added, looking appreciatively at the young but intelligent face of her niece, 'and perhaps it is as well, all things considered, you should see things as they are. I fear you must know that all is not right.'

May looked inquiring and anxious.

'I am afraid there has been something unsatisfactory about the election business,' continued Miss Bosanquet. 'My dear cousin will do anything for peace, without studying consequences: he may have been led to take a part in the matter that, upon reflection, his conscience would not quite approve. It occurs to me that in some way he has been taken undue advantage of. I heard something very like a threat from young Bryant as he came out of his room the other day.'

May had often noticed that Sir Lionel would submit to any amount of imposition and extortion for the sake of quiet, and could quite understand *that* part of her aunt's speech; but she did not see what there was to *fear*. The idea of a threat from one to whom Sir Lionel had shown habitual kindness was also beyond her comprehension.

Dr. Coleridge's arrival prevented further conversation, and May led the way to the spot where the wounded man still lay; while Miss Bosanquet anxiously asked herself whether she had been right in mentioning the subject of Sir Lionel's frailty to May, for, although a knowledge of it had not in her own case been allowed to impair her affection for him, it might be otherwise with May, and she would not willingly rob him of the love he so much coveted.

'Stand up! stand up!' said the doctor, with a smile of ridicule, after examining the arm. 'Why, the youngest soldier in the army, with the least regard for his professional credit, would

have wound his handkerchief round it and gone on charging his gun. You 're suffering from fear more than anything else, my good fellow.'

Sir Lionel, who had been walking to and fro in a state of pitiful anxiety, seemed greatly relieved, and something almost amounting to a tear glistened in his soft expressionless blue eye as, a few minutes afterwards, he conducted the young man into the house, and took him into one of the handsomest and most comfortable chambers at the Warren.

'Won't he just play the big?' whispered one of the men, as Dr. Coleridge placed him on the bed, in order to ascertain the exact amount of injury inflicted.

The report was, that the shot had penetrated very little beyond the skin; that all that was necessary to be done was to remove any irritating material, and to take means to prevent inflammation.

'It will not be a very severe punishment to keep quiet for a day or two, if Sir Lionel intends to lodge you in this lordly style,' said the doctor, addressing his patient, and looking round the luxurious room, and then out upon the gorgeous landscape, with its rich colouring—here a contrast, there a shading so perfect as to proclaim the hand of a Divine artist. 'I should rather like to spend a week in this room myself.'

But his patient seemed too much overcome to think of anything but his own necessities, and, stretching out his hand, asked for something to drink, in a voice the sincerity of which (relying upon Dr. Coleridge's opinion that the hurt was a mere scratch) seemed questionable.

'What had he better take?' asked Vincent, feeling a kind of resentment at his master being duped, and volunteering to take the care of the wounded man into his own hands.

'Better be a little careful for a day or so: a little wine in his water won't *hurt* him.'

'That's right, Vincent, good fellow,' said Sir Lionel; 'take care of him. We must do all we can to make his confinement as little trying as possible.'

'The mischief is so slight, there will be no difficulty after a few days,' said the doctor. 'Now I advise him to have a nap.'

His reassuring manner so much relieved Sir Lionel that a sudden reaction took place in his spirits, and he appeared more light-hearted than usual, and after Dr. Coleridge had gone said to May, that while their patient was resting he didn't see why they need be done out of their ride, especially as she wanted to make some purchases.

May did not know either, and they accordingly rode together to the town.

On coming out of a shop, they were surprised to find that a group of men had collected round their horses, and that at the sight of them hissings, suppressed groans, and mutterings should meet their ears. They mounted, however, and rode away without interruption; but May looked to Sir Lionel for an explanation of so unusual an occurrence.

'It's always the case at elections: a man makes enemies *then* if he doesn't at any other time in his life,' was the uneasy response. 'I was a fool to have anything to do with it—one can't vote for everybody.'

The answer seemed reasonable enough; but, adding one and one together, May did not feel satisfied, and was unusually silent on her way home.

'We must not neglect our patient,' said Sir Lionel, parting from her at the door of Bryant's room; 'he will feel it irksome to be a prisoner.'

Election time.—*P.* 148.

May gave a little impatient turn of her head, saying, 'He could go home if he liked;' adding playfully, by way of qualifying a remark that might seem unsympathetic to Sir Lionel,

> '"The prison into which we doom ourselves,
> No prison is."'

Sir Lionel smiled, but it was a faint smile, as if he were troubled.

Scotswood was soon beset with visitors making inquiries after the health of the patient. It had not only been reported that Sir Lionel had shot him, but, as is invariably the case in any affair of the sort, the horrors of the case had been greatly magnified, and the result was that, during the first fortnight after the accident, Bryant held quite a *levée* in his room; and 'Didn't he just give himself quality airs!' as the servants expressed it.

At the end of that time, Miss Bosanquet, not seeing any reason why he should not return home, suggested to Sir Lionel the desirability of his doing so; but the reply was, that that was not for them to propose—that he had been complaining again, as if the injury had affected his whole system.

'His father is coming to-day; it is to be hoped he will settle something,' said May.

Sir Lionel gave an uneasy movement of his shoulder—a habit of his when he was troubled—and left the room.

Although little inclined to study, for there seemed so much to disturb her, May took her books, and, ensconcing herself comfortably in an easy seat, endeavoured to prepare for her masters, who were again in attendance.

The first thing that diverted her attention was Argus pricking up his ears.

'I dare say that is Mr. Bryant,' said Miss Bosanquet, answering her look of inquiry.

'We need not see him,' returned May. 'There is no reason why he should disturb us.'

But the Bryants always seemed to bring disturbance! They had been sitting quietly for some time when they heard a door open on to the hall, and Mr. Bryant saying, in a cool business-like voice,

'Some one will have to appear. They seem determined to sift the matter. Strange this accident should have happened. It would look like a case of malice in a court of law. I don't see how to help you' (as if thinking what was best to be done). 'They know that it was you who supplied the means.'

'If it is as you say, I have been misled in the matter,' returned Sir Lionel, in an excited voice. 'I merely responded to your son's request for money to appropriate as he thought best. I can't see what business any one has to interfere with that.'

'It is a thing commonly done, but they just happen to have taken it up,' said Mr. Bryant. 'You shall hear again.' And he rode off.

Miss Bosanquet, looking at her niece, said,

'It will be better for you to make no remark, love. Whenever the Bryants have had free access to Scotswood there has been mischief. I used to think it was their Church's coffers they wished to fill, but now it seems they have been on another tack.'

'William Bryant is asking for some one to sit with him,' said Sir Lionel, entering the room, and looking troubled. 'He complains of your not having once asked him how he does,' he added, addressing May. 'Will you go and stop with him a little?'

He spoke as if compliance would be conferring a favour on

himself, and a struggle went on in May's mind between her wish to please him and her great dislike to the task he had imposed, and looking round the room, and selecting two or three of the newest books, she replied, 'I will take him these,' and at once made her way to William Bryant's room. She found him lying on a sofa, surrounded by every luxury that money and good taste could supply; but her entrance was a sign for him to assume an expression of suffering and *ennui*, and, looking at her with a quite-at-home expression, he said,

'The sight of you is like a sunbeam! If I had known you would have come, I would have asked for you before. It is difficult to read reclining, and to turn over one's book with the left hand. You might have saved me many weary hours.'

May was put upon her mettle, and said, in an off-hand tone,

'Perhaps you will like to look at some books that have just come from the library. From Dr. Coleridge's report I hoped you were quite well. I suppose you sit up some part of the day?'

'A thing of this sort so shakes one! I feel the more I recline the better,' returned the young man, adding anxiously, as he saw her about to leave the room, 'You are going to stay with me?'

'I am too busy. I've more than I can do already,' returned May. 'I hope you will soon be able to go home.' And without further ceremony she returned to her aunt, and said that she had taken him something to read, but could not stay with him.

'It was not at all necessary,' returned Miss Bosanquet. 'But you were kind, I hope?'

'I told him I hoped he would soon be able to go home,' replied May, 'and as he compared me to a sunbeam, I suppose my presence was cheering. One would have thought he might

have found a less commonplace comparison,' she added, smiling.

'It does me good to see you laugh,' said Miss Bosanquet, affectionately.

'Then I will go to the old dame and get her mother's recipe for the relaxation of the risible muscles,' returned May, 'for mine are likely to grow rigid for want of use if William Bryant is to be here, bringing a list of evils in his train. North is looking quite cross. She says he rings his bell just to show his authority.'

'In our discomfort at his prolonged stay, I am afraid we are forgetting to be grateful that the accident was so slight,' said Miss Bosanquet, thoughtfully. 'How should we all have been feeling had the wound proved mortal? How sadly we take all God's mercies as things of course!'

'My thank-offering shall be a cake and a pot of butter to Dame Froggatt,' returned May. 'It is to be hoped I shan't meet a wolf by the way! You are sure you don't mind my taking Alsie, aunt?' She had left her old nurse in the North, and wished to have Alsie Burton in her stead.

'Quite sure, love; but you will have to be a little patient with her at first. She will not be able to manage for you as nurse did.'

'No; but then she will be more *manageable*, and will allow me to decide how I like my hair done. I feel like a mermaid with all these streaming curls, and I believe nothing would have persuaded nurse that any other style would look so well. You do not regret my having left nurse behind?' she asked. 'It seemed right for mamma to have the oldest servants about her.'

'I am glad, love, but I wish you to bear in mind that Alsie is

not likely to be a clever lady's-maid without some initiation into her business.'

'Exactly, Auntie; I know all that, but I think I shall like her.' And she set off on her errand, meeting a wolf in the hall in the mild form of the mild Sir Lionel, who expressed his surprise that she was not with Bryant.

'I did go, but I didn't stay with him,' returned May; 'you wouldn't wish me to do what I particularly dislike?' she asked, raising herself on tip-toe, conscious of the power of a caress to make all straight with him (she was always a child with Sir Lionel).

'My jewel, my fairy!' he exclaimed, his accent evidencing uneasiness; 'you must not be too hard upon the poor young fellow: he thinks a great deal of *you!*'

'I am going to settle about Alsie coming to me as my maid,' she interrupted abruptly. 'Auntie thinks she will do, and I shall like her better than a stranger. If you would walk with me I should so like it.'

Sir Lionel was quite willing, and they set off together, May amusing him by the way with a list of Alsie's accomplishments, until he stopped her by commendations of her generosity, in having appropriated so much of her pocket-money for the girl's education, which praise May was not inclined to accept.

They found Alsie neatly dressed, sitting at work, making a gown for her mother; and on May's disclosing the object of her visit her pretty face flushed with pleasure.

Mrs. Burton, who was 'tidying up a bit,' listened with pride to the projected change in her daughter's fortune, and expressed her opinion that Alsie would be as nice a maid as could be when she had no work to make her draggle-tailed, adding, with a curtsey every now and then by way of gratitude

or apology, that 'She had took to the young lady ever sin' the poor boy's accident.'

Sir Lionel expressed his hope that the arrangement would prove satisfactory, and pointing out May's gifts to old Bettie, who had been amusing herself dusting and re-dusting every seat in the room, seemed in a hurry to be gone.

'Come up to see my aunt this evening,' said May, addressing Alsie, who stood looking intelligent, and conscious of her mother's unscholarly speech.

The girl assented, and as they left the cottage May made some remark as to her fitness, in appearance at least, for the post about to be assigned to her, whereupon Sir Lionel again flattered her by saying that it was she who had been the making of the girl; but May was in a sensible mood, and his praises fell harmlessly on her ear. For praise to be acceptable to her, she must feel it to be deserved.

'Who is that just leaving the Warren?' she asked, as a tall slight figure, in clerical garb, moved away in a direction contrary to the one by which they were approaching it.

'By his coat I should take him to be a friend of Bryant's,' returned Sir Lionel.

'He looks too much of a gentleman,' said May. 'There is something refined and graceful in his outline: look at it against the sky. "A grace beyond the rules of art,"' she quoted, laughing.

CHAPTER XIII.

'On Sunday Heaven's gate stands ope,
Blessings are plentiful and rife,
More plentiful than Hope.'

WE left Helen standing in the hall of the abbey, having failed in her attempt at reconciliation with Lord Agramont.

'This is a bitter punishment for so small an offence,' she thought, as she tried in vain to steady the irregular pulsations of her heart. A proud look of despondency sat on her handsome face, while she endeavoured to convince herself that there was nothing in life worth the anxiety that had been weighing upon her. With an unreasoning sense of wounded affection, she made her way to the sanctuary of her own room, but there concluding with practical philosophy that while nothing could be done it would be unprofitable to sit down listlessly and weep, that the most likely thing to afford relief would be interesting occupation, she made a strong effort for composure, and joined her sister in the study.

Taking her books, a perennial resource, she determined that no excuse should be needed on the next occasion of Mr. Harrington's attendance, and was interestedly turning over the leaves of a lexicon, when Miss Aberley entered the room.

'I am glad to see you at work, dear Helen,' she said, with a satisfied look at her pupil. 'When you are not inclined for study, I always know that mind and body are not properly balanced—that one or other is out of order. Do you want any help?'

'Thank you; I must get on without you now. You have not spoken to Lord Agramont yet?'

'No; but I have just had a letter from the friends going to India, to say that they start in less than a month. If we wish to gain our point, I must make it plain to him that there is every security for your being well taken care of, and it will therefore be necessary to enter fully into particulars. I am delaying until I can write quite leisurely.'

Another stab at poor Helen! It seemed as if she was to be reminded of her injustice and ingratitude.

'You do not *know* Madame de Bernonville?' Helen inquired.

'Not at all, except from report. The daughters of several Indian friends of mine have been under her care, and I have always heard her spoken of as a woman of considerable talent, and her household as well ordered. It is quite my impression that she would take care that you did not lose your time, being sufficiently intellectual herself to detect any want of depth or talent in her masters. The only drawback I see to the plan is, that Fan is rather young to mix with those whose principles are not founded on the same basis as our own. Madame de Bernonville is a Roman Catholic; and although she never interferes with the religious education of her pupils, her style of thought is not likely to be quite in accordance with our views. You will have Dr. Milman, a friend of Lord Agramont's, for your counsellor; and I can only hope no evil will result.'

Miss Aberley was a formalist in matters of religion, but had never brought it to bear on the small circumstances of every-day life, and therefore had not taught her pupils to do so. The danger thus hinted at seemed in consequence very unimportant to Helen, who replied with decision that she thought it was the very best thing they could do, adding, affectionately,

'Wherever we are we shall feel the want of you; but I have been wishing to see something of other countries, and now this opportunity has offered I should not like to neglect it.'

Miss Aberley agreed that a change might be beneficial, and left her, to write a letter to Lord Agramont, acquainting him with the summons she had received, and proposing the plans above mentioned, and offering, should it coincide with his views respecting them, to see her pupils safely under Madame de Bernonville's roof before she left Europe. So complete were the arrangements she suggested that Lord Agramont immediately returned a note of thanks for her consideration, acknowledging the practicability of her plans, and promising, if, upon talking them fully over with both the girls, they cordially acquiesced in them, at once to communicate with an old college friend of his, who was at that time acting as minister in one of the Protestant chapels in Paris, and request him to inquire particulars of Madame de Bernonville's establishment.

As Helen heard this letter read, and observed his careful regard to their wishes being consulted in the arrangement, she experienced á feeling of dire anxiety lest she should have to go away without a word of forgiveness, and came to the conclusion that *it could not be*—that she must *write* if she could find no other way of access to him.

Miss Aberley acted upon the letter of Lord Agramont's directions, by talking more fully over her scheme with her pupils

and on their expressing their entire appreciation of the benefit likely to result from a stay in Paris, a correspondence was entered upon with Madame de Bernonville and Dr. Milman; and all preliminaries being settled, a stir was made at the abbey preparatory to their departure.

Sylvie was unwilling to leave her comfortable quarters for another 'furrin country;' and while she took care to let it be understood that she would not on any account intrust her young ladies to any one else's care, she wanted indulging, and was not as helpful as was her wont—she did not see the necessity of hurry; so that more devolved upon Miss Aberley than should have been allowed.

The effort necessary for the completion of arrangements in the short time between their deciding to go and the day fixed for their obligatory departure, was good for Helen. If she happened to fall into a troubled reverie, some practical business question would arouse her; so that, though still unrelieved, her grief was less absorbing.

Lord Agramont wrote to say that they were to be unsparing in any purchases they liked to make, and that he would see their travelling cases were sent down, but not a word as to whether he might be expected at the abbey.

The visits they had to pay were very few, but among them was one to Scotswood; and Miss Bosanquet was lying thinking over May's annoyance, in being unwillingly subjected to the companionship of William Bryant, and with how much greater carefulness to his child's preferences a father would have viewed the matter, when 'Miss Aberley and the Misses Douglas' were announced, and were shown into the room where she and May were sitting.

'Why, May, dear! you are not looking well,' remarked Miss

Aberley, after the first greeting. 'Are you sure you do not expose yourself too much to these heavy autumn mists? At this time of the year Frances sometimes looks just so.'

Miss Bosanquet felt that her niece's want of tone could be otherwise accounted for; but May only replied with a bright smile. Her brightness, however, soon became clouded, when her friends announced that they had come to say 'Good bye,' that Miss Aberley had had a summons to India, and that they were going to pass the time of her absence in Paris.

'I wish I was going too,' was May's quick rejoinder. 'What *will* you do without Miss Aberley?'

Helen replied that twelve months would soon pass, and that she intended to like the change.

Miss Bosanquet was minute in her inquiries as to the style of Madame de Bernonville's establishment, and she and Miss Aberley talked together for some time, while the three girls went on a roving expedition.

At last the parting came. Promises of detailed correspondence were exchanged, and May was left, feeling very lonely and disconsolate.

Time was now hastening on, and the period fixed for the ladies to leave the abbey drawing near, but Lord Agramont had not made his appearance, and Helen was growing very anxious, when one evening, as they were sitting down to tea, the grating of carriage wheels on the gravel outside announced an arrival. She knew it was he. All the feelings that had so disturbed her weeks before now came back in full force, and as she heard a firm, decided step cross the hall, she tremblingly asked herself on what footing they would meet?

A minute after, he entered the room, and when he had shaken hands all round, he took a seat, and began conversing with them.

Helen strove hard to command herself; but, as he seated himself opposite to her, and drew Frances to him with a caressing gesture, saying he must have her close to him now that they were so soon to part, she found the effort a painful one. She knew that, though not seeming to see, and talking business with Miss Aberley, he was watching her narrowly. It was evident he expected some volunteering on her part, and a feeling of pride, impalpable to herself, urged her to try to look at ease; but an involuntary motion would evidence the strain she was putting on her nerves, and her face, which had at first assumed a death-like paleness, now gave place to spots of deep crimson.

Her inarticulate distress touched Lord Agramont, and he was going to speak; but feeling that it would pain her less if he waited until they were alone, he rose and left the room.

Fearing the last chance of reconciliation was about to pass away, pride and reserve entirely vanished, and, rising quickly, she followed him. There was an awkwardness for a moment, as they stood in the hall confronting each other. Helen thought he looked a little stern, or astonished; but she made a pleading gesture, to which he returned one of keen inquiry, as if to decide whether her manner arose from conscientiousness or affection; observing her troubled look, and convinced that no feeling unmixed with love could give the expression that was on her face, he smiled, stooped, and kissed her.

No one could be indifferent to Lord Agramont's smile—it was a smile that had to be won; and a quick thrill of joy passed through her heart and lighted up her countenance, revealing at once her suffering at his displeasure and her relief that it was remitted. He had not considered her capable of so much feeling, but as cold, proud, and self-sufficing, so indifferent to soft

influences, as to be almost unwomanly; and this revelation touched him. He stood holding her hand in both his, and said kindly,

'I want you with me a little while before you go: you must manage to spend your last few days in Eaton Place, and help me to think how I can best please our little Frances. You should both pull well at my purse-strings before you leave us,' he added. 'I remember when I was a boy I was full of wants. My father used to say my letters contained little else but a list of them. Try to think I am your father.'

Helen was too glad and subdued for much demonstration of her pleasure, but it was with a lightened heart she retired to her room, and the memorable spot which had before witnessed her sorrow now saw her prostrated with a feeling of thankfulness before an unknown God for its relief.

A few days in London, and twenty-four hours of easy travelling, and Helen and Frances Douglas were in Paris. Miss Aberley stayed with them one night, and then there came the morning, when they were alone among strangers.

Helen was lying awake, listening to the unintelligible screams and cries peculiar to Paris, puzzling as to what they meant, when Frances raised herself in the little bed she occupied next hers, and as she looked round the strange apartment, her eyes began to fill with tears. Helen at once roused herself, and looking at her watch, proposed that they should get up. She knew from past experience that occupation was one of the best antidotes for grief.

They jumped out of bed, and looked on the street. The scavengers were busy clearing away the heterogeneous mass of refuse that had been thrown out during the night; old crones were handling its unsavoury particles in a matter-of-

course way that astonished the dainty notions of the English girls. A man hung with circles of bread passed by, uttering cries so indescribable that the sisters looked at each other in astonishment, and smiled. Then came a *voiture* rattling noisily over the sharp stones, accompanied by shrill shrieks from the *voiturier*, and the frequent cracking of his whip. This struck them as so comical that they laughed outright.

Helen felt that her sister's content now depended chiefly on her, and seeking for circumstances wherewith to console her, said cheerfully, as she rang the bell for Sylvie,

'Dr. Milman will seem like a friend. Lord Agramont knew him at college: he has heard we are here, and I dare say will come and speak to us. I hope we shall not be late for the service. I do not hear any one stirring.'

Frances hoped Dr. Milman would come and speak to them, and that they would not be too late for the service, but could hardly say so for her sobs. And Sylvie came in and scolded her for getting out of bed before the stove was warm; which scolding had, as is frequently the case, a rousing effect, so that when she went down to breakfast all traces of tears had disappeared.

Madame de Bernonville was very chatty, but Helen's manner must have seemed to her repelling; for as they left the room to prepare for church, she remarked to Eulalie, her favourite sister,

'*Vraiment, elles sont gentilles — très gentilles. Mais je les admirerai plus, quand elles seront un peu francisées — qu' elles auront perdu, un peu de leur raideur.*'

Helen never lost her stiffness with Madame de Bernonville. She never could understand why remarks that Madame made should cause her so much excitement, and preserved her own

quiet collected manner in spite of her. She appeared to her a true English girl, with the reserved taciturn disposition usually ascribed to the English by foreigners. They were in time for church, but the doctor was already in the reading-desk, apparently waiting to commence the service until an old man, who sat close by him, could get comfortably seated. Helen saw he recognized them, and his was not the only head that turned as they took their seats. They would have been noticed anywhere. There was something in their carriage and expression that would have distinguished the girls themselves, and Sylvie kept to her Eastern costume, even to the jewels in her nose.

The service commenced with the words of penitence, 'I will arise and go to my father,' and by some quick mental process, brought back vividly to Helen the few weeks that had preceded her leaving England. The subject chimed in opportunely with her feelings, for since her offence to Lord Agramont she had understood much better than she had ever before done the full meaning of the word *penitence*, and her heart was prepared to listen. Dr. Milman's earnest tones of exhortation and confession at once arrested her attention, so strikingly were they in contrast to the mechanical, unsympathetic voice in which she had been accustomed to hear the same words repeated in the church she was in the habit of attending. A spirit of devotion was gradually induced, and by the time the Thanksgiving was repeated, in which all the congregation audibly joined, she was prepared to lend her voice to swell the general burst of praise. The hymns were well selected, and the music feelingly executed, and prayer and praise prepared her for the enjoyment of the remaining part of the service.

As the doctor delivered his text, there was a look of ex-

pectancy and satisfaction on the people's faces, that reminded Helen of an old engraving of the 'First reading of the Bible in the Crypt of St. Paul's,' that hung up in the housekeeper's room at the abbey. The words were from Jeremiah: 'My Father, Thou art the guide of my youth.'

Is it a wonder that to those fatherless girls the idea of the fatherhood of God should interest them? Did they not feel the want of a father? Helen was soon among the most interested of the listeners: at first the doctor's words fell scrutinizingly on her ear, and then it seemed as if he were answering her thoughts. The startling words, 'Ye will not come unto me that ye may have life,' next excited her emotion. Did not this reproof apply to her better than the comfortable words to which she had been listening? The doctor spoke so pleadingly, that she actually coloured, as if conscious of having turned a deaf ear to gracious words of love and tenderness. She felt that God was to her a mere abstraction, an idealism, while to Dr. Milman He was a defined and positive Being, one to whom he had constant access.

Such were the impressions she carried away with her from that morning service.

In her preoccupied state of mind, the light conversation of the two French girls (who with themselves then constituted the whole of Madame de Bernonville's *coterie*) was uncongenial, and she retreated to a little room, designated the *Boudoir Anglais*, hoping to be quiet; but '*goûter*' was soon announced, and Frances claimed her sister for the remaining time before afternoon church, so that there was little opportunity for meditation.

On their way to church, the noise and novelty of a Sunday in Paris dissipated for a time all serious reflections, and

Frances speculated upon the improbability of such a very good man as Dr. Milman taking any notice of them, and was quietly pleased to see the very man himself come into the pew which they occupied, and which they afterwards discovered to be his own. He did not read the prayers, but when he mounted the pulpit, Helen at least was ready to hear what he had to say.

The prophet Jeremiah furnished him with another text: 'I know the thoughts I think towards you, saith the Lord; thoughts of peace and not of evil.' And after dwelling touchingly on a father's thoughts towards his children, and showing with what full confidence they might approach him, he called to mind the natural prompting of the heart to turn to God, when the absence of earthly friends and earthly interests had left it desolate; warning his hearers against taking Him into their heart only as a substitute; reminding them of the captain who, seeing his ungodly sailors kneeling in supplication during a storm, rebuked their past neglect by calling out, 'Say your prayers in fine weather!'

But as this is not the place for a sermon, what has been said must suffice to show the style of address and the principal texts which first awoke Helen to a true sense of her position in the sight of God; for it was from those sermons that she was aroused to heavenly hopes and interests.

As they left the church, she felt that with such a Sunday in prospect, the six days at St. Jullien's would not be unbearable, and that if they were all like that one, she could heartily echo the oddly expressed wish of an old Rabbi, 'that his portion might be with those who began the Sabbath with those of Tiberias, and ended it with those of Tsepphore,' in allusion to the time gained between the sun's appearance in the valley,

and on the mountain; Tiberias lying in a valley, and Tsepphore being a city that was set on a hill.

She was turning her head to look for Sylvie, when a girl of about twelve years of age put into her hand the following note, saying that it was from her grandpapa, Dr. Milman. The note ran thus:

Can you, my dear young ladies, come to me a few minutes after the evening service? I have been prevented calling on you, as I had intended.

Yours faithfully,

Avenue Marbœuf. A. MILMAN.

It would be difficult for some natures to understand with what pleasure this little note of invitation was welcomed,—Frances' eyes spoke her satisfaction, and Helen would have liked at once to accompany the messenger; but remembering she should first obtain Madame de Bernonville's permission, she hurried back to the hotel, and demanded an audience of that lady.

Madame was somewhat regal in her habits, and was difficult of access, but, fortunately for their patience, the '*Anglaises*' were decidedly favoured, and after only a short suspense they were admitted to her *boudoir*.

'Dr. Milman has invited us to go to his house this evening,' said Helen. 'Have we your permission to go?'

'Doctare Milman!' repeated Madame, as if trying to recollect herself.

'The clergyman at the English Church, a friend of Lord Agramont's: it was arranged that we should visit him,' replied Helen, assisting her memory.

'Ah, *par example!*' returned Madame: 'as your papa does wish.' At the same time shrugging her shoulders, evidently thinking they would meet with scant entertainment.

Helen did not wait to set her right as to their non-relationship to Lord Agramont, for Frances was standing outside, looking impatient for the business to be settled; and with a formal inclination she left the room, and summoned Sylvie to accompany them.

At the parsonage the door was opened to them by a neat-looking English serving-maid; who, upon their inquiring for Dr. Milman, told them very modestly that her master did not see visitors on Sundays.

'We are here by invitation,' returned Helen. 'If you give in my name—Miss Douglas—he will see us.'

The girl showed them into a little room close at hand, and a minute after ushered them into a comfortable English-looking library, with a glowing coal fire in the grate, by which they found the doctor seated.

Immediately rising, he took the initiative by placing a chair for Helen with one hand, and putting her into it with the other, saying,

'We will not consider ourselves strangers, as we have only just now been taking counsel together,' and then reseating himself, added, 'I hope Annie and I' (drawing forward his little granddaughter, who was retreating into the background), 'will succeed in making you feel at home here. In this place, we are but a little flock, and pastor and people are bound together by strong ties, besides those which must always unite true Christians. I like to know *all* the members of my congregation, and, as Lord Agramont's old college friend, it behoves me to take an especial interest in his children.'

His style of address was unfamiliar to Helen, and as she was silent, he continued,

'I would have you feel free to come to me at all times, as

to a friend and counsellor. You may find yourself in a difficult position here, if, as your presence among us to-day seems to say, you are anxious to maintain allegiance to the Master whom we have been professing to serve. The religion of this country is entirely material, and there is much in it to allure young minds from that God who is a Spirit, and who, to be worshipped acceptably, must be worshipped in spirit and in truth. The pomp and magnificence of the Romish ceremonies are very alluring to those who only like religion in silver slippers,' he added, smiling.

A servant here entered with a tray.

'Will you take some tea with me?' he asked; 'I have an engagement at seven, but, if you will cheer my tea-table, I will deliver you safely to Madame de Bernonville on my way.'

Helen and Frances exchanged looks. They had not dined, and thought they might be expected to be present at the dinner hour at St. Jullien's; but the temptation was great, and Helen thanked the doctor, and stayed.

'Experience has taught me that my head is clearer for not taking dinner on Sunday,' said the doctor, 'so that at this time I do justice to any light food that is set before me.'

Helen looked inquiringly, and he added,

'I find I can preserve a holier frame of mind, and so get through the service more satisfactorily, by taking only a light meal.'

Remembering that Frances would almost faint if she went longer than usual without food, Helen inquired if the convenience or inconvenience of fasting did not depend upon the constitution of the individual practising it.

'Entirely,' replied the doctor. 'We must each judge for ourselves in this matter; but from my own experience, I can

unhesitatingly give my vote in favour of those sages who never debated on affairs of state, unless the members of the council were fasting.'

Helen ventured to say that there was a great deal of wisdom in some of those ancient usages, and the doctor replied,

'Shall we show our appreciation of an old *Jewish* custom by sitting *round* the table? Their phrase of invitation to their guests to sit *down* was literally to sit *round*. "Thy children shall be like olive plants *round* about thy table,"' he quoted. 'Come, Annie, let us see how good a cup of tea you can brew us.' And he placed chairs for his visitors.

Annie felt so very small in the presence of Helen, who was seventeen and unusually tall, that she whispered, 'Would Miss Douglas be so kind?' and the doctor, pleased at any suggestion that was likely to remove the restraint his mode of address had imposed, readily echoed her proposition. Helen, who found no difficulty in harmonizing her manner with those for whom she felt respect, readily did as she was requested, and responded to the kind wish that they would make themselves quite at home, so that they soon became sociable. Helen had some toast of the doctor's buttering, and Frances some brown bread and butter especially the doctor's own. Puzzling but useful questions were put to the younger girls — so puzzling, that Annie said mischievously, that grandpapa ought not to ask riddles on a Sunday. Then arose the question whether Samson asked *his* riddle on a Sabbath. The doctor said it was certainly a feast day, and as he skilfully introduced subjects that would yield matter for instruction, said that he supposed Miss Annie would not object to that sort of conversation; that if she did, she had better turn to the 14th of St. Luke's Gospel, and there she would find an account of our Saviour proposing a parable at a

feast. The early *Jewish* custom of blessing the bread and wine at a feast was discussed, and the giving thanks afterwards. It was a style of conversation very new to Helen, and perhaps the doctor varied it advisedly when he asked her to read aloud some lines of James Montgomery's that had just appeared in a publication, a copy of which then lay on the table. They are so pretty that it may be worth while to follow her as she reads.

'Not worlds on worlds in phalanx deep,
Need we to prove a God is here;
The daisy fresh from winter's sleep
Tells of His hand in lines as clear.

'For who but He who arched the skies,
And poured the dayspring's living flood,
Wondrous alike in all He tries,
Could rear the daisy's purple bud?

'Mould its green cup, its wiry stem,
Its fringèd border nicely spin,
And cut its gold embossèd gem,
That, set in silver, gleams within?

'And fling it unrestrained and free
O'er hill, and dale, and desert sod?
That man where'er he walks may see
In every step the stamp of God.'

Francis thought the verse about the 'green cup-fringed border and gold embossed gem' a pretty description of her favourite daisy, and as the table was being cleared, committed the lines to memory.

It was now nearly dark, but as the moon shone softly through the casement, the doctor thought it a pity to introduce any other light, and said that, instead of reading, he would repeat the words of the 1st Psalm, and the same impressive voice to which Helen had listened with so much pleasure at church, was

the medium through which she heard, for the first time intelligently, those striking words. How often had she heard them before without attaching to them any particular meaning! *Now* every word seemed vivified. He went through the psalm to the end, and then kneeling, and drawing the two girls towards him, laid a hand on each and prayed—prayed that they might be God's own children, that they might adorn their profession in *all* things, that the fruits of the Spirit might grow in them, that they might meditate on His law with delight, and so learn to know and to do His will, that they might at last be set as jewels in their Saviour's crown, and shine in it as the stars for ever and ever.

His words were few, but especially impressive to those to whom real prayer was a novelty, spoken as they were by the fireside in the midst of an evening's occupation; and Helen had never before seen religion to be so practical a thing. Feeling how ignorant she was—how entirely uninformed on a most important subject, in spite of her boasted acquirements—as she stood before the doctor she felt of the same spirit as Saul in the presence of Samuel, who was ready to strip himself of his royal apparel, and humbly to submit to the prophet's teaching.

Dr. Milman went to his book-shelves, and taking from them a copy of the Olney Hymns, opened them at the frontispiece, and pointing to a girl in the attitude of prayer, said, '*That* is the delight of a Christian.' Then, begging her acceptance of the little volume, said he was obliged to dismiss them. During the walk home, he confirmed the favourable impression she had received; and from that time Helen felt a girlish devotion to her venerable friend.

CHAPTER XIV.

'He parted frowning from me, as if ruin
Leap'd from his eyes: so looks the chasèd lion
Upon the daring huntsman that has gall'd him,
Then makes him nothing.'

WE must now return to May, who, considering the circumstances in which we left her, has, we think, some claim on our sympathy.

On the day the Douglases went to pay their farewell visit at Scotswood, Sir Lionel was not at home. He had gone to London the day previously, and had not returned at night, although he had desired that his carriage should be awaiting him at the railway station.

His non-appearance, so contrary to his usual habit, had caused both May and her aunt some uneasiness; but, as Miss Bosanquet had observed his avoidance of the town since the day of the election, her anxiety on account of his absence was somewhat mitigated.

The visit of Miss Aberley and the Douglases had diverted May's mind for a time; but when they had taken their leave, she exclaimed, despondently,

'And they, too, are gone; and this is the end of that pleasant visiting!'

'Not the end, love, I hope,' said Miss Bosanquet. 'Retro-

spectively, the time of absence will appear short. You must write frequently: you may find pleasure even in correspondence.'

'It is difficult to find people just to your taste,' returned May, disinclined to accept the consolation offered. 'I believe they are the nicest girls in the world, and the *best*, too: sometimes I feel them to be a little *too* good for me.'

'They *are* very charming,' said Miss Bosanquet, sympathizingly.

'Helen reminds me of people of whom you read in books,' said May. 'I suppose she thinks my appreciative sense entitles me to a small share of her regard; but I always have a slight feeling of intrusion when I approach her *sanctum* at the abbey—that is, the table on which her books are spread,' she added, laughing—'her thoughts look so far off; and while she is wishing to appear interested, I can see she is quite indifferent to the little things Fan and I talk about.'

'I dare say she has turned to study as her great resource,' returned Miss Bosanquet. 'Not having had the home sympathies most girls have, would naturally cause her to rely upon herself for amusement. Could we see her inner life, I dare say we should find the same causes of joy or sorrow at work in her as in the case of those you would not class under the title of book heroines.'

'Well, *perhaps*,' said May, abstractedly. 'There seems a chance of her becoming *very blue* while she is in France, for Miss Aberley says that Madame Bernonville pushes her pupils on at a great rate: her representation made me quite envious, for I feel to be in so miserable a state of mental decrepitude as to need some one to give me a push on. If I try to settle myself to anything I am sure to be disturbed. I should like to start a race with them.'

While finishing her sentence she sprang to the window, and, with a gesture of delight, admitted Sir Lionel.

'Why did you not come home last night? Have you walked up the hill?' were her first questions.

He sat down as if tired, and, while wincing a little at her point-blank questions, replied that he had had so much shopping to do that he had not been able to get through it as soon as he had expected.

May looked puzzled.

'Among other things, I have ordered a travelling cloak lined with fur, and a white beaver bonnet, for a little fairy friend of mine.' By way of explanation he continued, 'Although, by-the-bye, I ought to have considered whether a fairy would consent to be so materialized.'

'I think a fairy thus equipped would look quite as little *en règle* as you thought my canary bird would look in the pink satin bonnet, and ermine cape, I proposed for it when it sat ruffling its feathers as if it was cold,' said May mischievously.

Sir Lionel laughed. She could always charm him into a merry mood.

'But were am I going to travel?' she asked, naturally concluding that the purchase of a travelling cloak must mean a journey.

'I am thinking of going on the Continent now, instead of at the usual time,' replied Sir Lionel, addressing himself to Miss Bosanquet. 'There will be a little difficulty about Bryant, but I shall try.'

'*Try!*—what *did* he mean?' Miss Bosanquet looked an inquiry.

'Bryant will not like to be left,' returned Sir Lionel.

'Are you obliged to consult him as to your movements?'

returned the lady, feeling the dignity in which Sir Lionel was deficient.

'*I* was the cause of his being laid by,' was the uneasy reply.

'He is lying by, rather than laid by. I cannot recognize his claim to consideration in the matter.'

Sir Lionel made no reply, and she was silent, for she felt vexed. If there was a little difficulty, as she expected, how much more manly it would have been for him to have stood his ground and to have faced it, instead of shirking it by leaving the country.

'Should I go with you?' asked May.

Miss Bosanquet, who did not at all like the impending prospect of May being left to his sole charge in a foreign country, for she had no opinion of his judgment, and did not consider him at all a fit guardian for her, roused herself for the emergency, and said experimentally,

'The Douglases have been here to-day to say "good bye." *They* are just about to start for Paris. Miss Aberley is going on a visit to her brother in India, and during her absence they are going to study with a lady of whom she has some knowledge. What do you say to May joining them, instead of wasting more of her valuable time? You generally stay in Paris a great deal, and would be able to see her frequently.'

May coloured with pleasure.

'What does my fairy say?' asked Sir Lionel.

'I should like it above all things.'

'Then we will go,' said Sir Lionel, relieved to see his way clearing before him—it would seem a very natural occurrence for him to take May to school, especially as her friends, the Douglases, had preceded her—'but don't say anything about our movements. When can you be ready?'

'If you are satisfied that the plan is a good one, she can be ready at any time,' returned Miss Bosanquet, wondering at his unquestioning decision. 'I think it will be very beneficial to her to mix with girls of her own age, and I have full confidence in any arrangement Lord Agramont would make for the Douglases.'

So anxious was she to save May from being thrown solely on his society, that for the time she quite lost sight of the deprivation she would experience in her absence.

'We will go, and after she is tired of lionizing with me, she can go to her books,' said Sir Lionel, leaving the room. A load seemed to have been removed from his mind.

A few minutes after he was closeted with Vincent, making arrangements for their journey; and Miss Bosanquet was left to weigh the fruits of her unselfishness, and to comfort herself with the reflection that she had done what was right. Sir Lionel was so weak that there was no knowing into what difficulties May might become involved if she were to stay at home; and she felt, too, that there was something wounding to a girl's delicacy in her then position, with Mr. Bryant at Scotswood. These thoughts were interrupted by the subject of her reflections entering the room. There were traces of tears in her eyes, and she said despondently,

'Auntie, I am feeling the embodiment of selfishness; indeed, no one except yourself appears to have a more sublime subject for contemplation just now than *him* or *her*self. Bryant has just sent for me to tell me that his appetite is quite failing, and to ask if you can suggest something that he could eat; and I am thinking of leaving you to get out of his way. No one seems to think of you, but you are to think for all. Sir Lionel says that he thinks we can arrange to leave the day after to-

morrow, and that I had better not say "good bye" to any one,' she added, as if wishing an explanation.

'I am glad he has settled so,' said Miss Bosanquet (her expression qualifying, if it did not run counter to her words). 'We had better see Alsie at once. I would rather that North should have accompanied you; but she is so necessary to me just now that I can't spare her; and I think, with Sylvie to set Alsie a steady example, she will do very nicely. I would rather she had been three and thirty than three and twenty; but as you like her I will try to be satisfied.'

Miss Bosanquet had made an effort to control herself during this speech. May observed it, and, throwing herself on her neck, wept with regret at the effect her suggestion had produced.

'I am convinced it is the very best thing we could arrange for you, love; and in that case it would be weak of us to regret it. Railways shorten distances so much that we shall only feel a few hours apart. I want you to keep up bravely, and to think of things which, if I had been stronger, I ought to have thought of for you. You will have to tell me what you would like me to do for you while you are away.'

May took her place by the couch, and for a time aunt and niece amused themselves defining their relative duties during absence. The sun was just at its setting, and the latter remarked, dejectedly,

'We have watched a good many sunsets together, Auntie: let us promise always to think of each other at this time. Do you ever have the feeling, when you are looking at anything very lovely, of wanting to take it and those you love in one wide embrace?' And she looked disappointed as she felt how difficult it was to represent feelings by words.

But Miss Bosanquet quite understood her. She, too, had

many phases of feeling that did not come within the reach of logical description, and she stooped and kissed her.

'Might not one fancy *that* a city in flames?' asked May, pointing to the horizon, which was vividly illuminated with streaks of lurid fire streaming from behind clouds of dense blackness.

'Or of heaven's gate opening and letting escape some rays of light from the golden city,' suggested Miss Bosanquet. 'We get in the habit of speculating as to the probable delights of the eternal city when we feel its gates will ere long open to receive us.'

May looked up. She had never known her aunt otherwise than as an invalid, and did not take heed to the full significance of her words; but there was something in the tone and accent that touched her, and she buried her face in her aunt's lap and indulged in tears.

'I did not expect to see you so out of spirits,' said Miss Bosanquet, soothingly. 'You know that I never like to see the rose colour turn to grey,' she added (remarks they had sometimes made together on the grey that follows sunset, furnishing her with a comparison to May's spirits—once so bright, now so clouded and overcast).

'As one gets old,' returned May (she was not fifteen), 'I think the sombre tints seem naturally to supersede the rose colour, just as surely as the shades of evening follow sunset.'

Miss Bosanquet smiled at this mature sentiment, and said cheerfully, by way of a diversion,

'We must have some plan about writing. I will not ask you for more than a letter a week, but I should like it to be filled by daily contributions. By that means I shall get a more satisfactory insight into the way you spend your time.'

'A sort of journal?' suggested May. 'It is to be hoped it will not be full of the times of rising and going to bed, as *some* of the journals are,' she added, laughing. 'But I will promise to enter minutely into particulars.'

'Thanks, darling! And now go and talk to North about what you will like packed; and only think of the pleasure that is, I trust, in store for you.'

'I like to go very much,' said May, conscientiously; 'the only thought that was troubling me was that I must leave you.'

The next day, when Dr. Coleridge paid his usual professional visit to Miss Bosanquet, she made it an opportunity of asking him if there were any longer reason why Mr. Bryant should remain in imprisonment; and having received his opinion that there was none whatever, she made him the confidant of Sir Lionel's plans, and expressed her wish that, if the young man's health would not suffer by the removal, he should leave Scotswood at once, adding, that as Vincent, who had been his attendant, would accompany his master, it was necessary some change should be made.

It was seldom that Miss Bosanquet took any decided step in household arrangements (Mrs. Shelley used so carefully to spare her all trouble); but now she knew that, unless she controlled this matter, there would be a difficulty, Sir Lionel seemed so very unwilling to moot any plan for the young man's removal.

'He shall go home with me,' said the doctor, at once detecting that Bryant had outstayed his welcome; and after a lengthened conversation with her, went in to his other patient, and suggested the desirability of his departure, as a longer stay would be an inconvenience to his host.

'I do not feel equal to the move at present,' returned the

young man, with decision in his tone. 'I am not fit for it: I am feeling weaker than I have done yet, and during the last few days my appetite has entirely failed.'

'You have comfortably helped me to the conclusion, that on hygeian principles at least the change is just what you require,' said the doctor, always accepting Bryant's account of himself with limitation. 'As to loss of appetite, the fact is you have been living too well, and are now feeling the effects of it.'

'As Sir Lionel has maimed me, I do not consider it any generosity for him to give me house-room as long as it pleases me to accept it. Arrangements have been made for me here that I can't have at home,' he added murmuringly.

'If you would rather stay till to-morrow, I won't urge your going to-day,' replied the doctor; 'but you can't stay longer, since your removal has been proposed at head quarters.'

Vincent had entered the room during the latter part of the conversation, and overhearing the subject under discussion, remarked, with much politeness,

'I'll take care, sir, that he shan't have more fatigue than he can bear, and that everything shall be ready, so that you are not kept waiting.'

He knew that all the servants, to say nothing of the other members of the household, would be ready to give him a hoist into the carriage, should his strength fail, and was not going to let an opportunity slip for getting rid of so unwelcome a guest.

Upon hearing what measures had been taken to rid the house of his visitor, Sir Lionel discovered that he had business that would take him from home that day; and as William Bryant was engaged with a friend, 'the same gentleman,' Vincent said, 'as was there the afternoon of the accident — the tall, pale, black-haired gentleman, with a long coat buttoned up to the

throat,' Sir Lionel did not see him until the following day, when, to use his own expression, he caught a tartar. Bryant evidently expected to have remained a guest at Scotswood during pleasure, and had no idea of surrendering his personal comforts without a struggle. Sir Lionel's absence would put an end, for a time at least, to his pecuniary extortions, no less than to his epicurean delights; and, incensed at the prospect, all moral sense seemed to leave him, and he reproached Sir Lionel in no honeyed terms, in the first place for the perpetration of the accident, and in the next for going abroad without him, when he knew that such a change would be likely to be beneficial to him in his shattered condition.

May, after giving directions as to what she would like to take with her, and herself collecting various treasures, felt so tired and weary, that she retired early to bed. That had been the longest day she ever remembered, and, weary with excitement, she was soon asleep.

The next morning, Dr. Coleridge's carriage came to convey the invalid home; and wishing to be friends with everybody on that her last day at Scotswood, May stood at the door, to wish him good bye. She wore a blue cloak lined with sable, and a most becoming white beaver bonnet, relieved inside by a little rose colour (Sir Lionel indulged his dilettanteism in her dress, as much as in the furniture of his house); and, upon seeing her thus daintily equipped, Mr. Bryant called up an admiring look, followed by an air of such supreme tragicality, that she was glad to retire, to save her credit 'for sympathy,' whereupon his expression changed to one of smothered passion. As the carriage drove off, Sir Lionel noticed a brooding, malignant look on his face, that seemed to augur mischief.

After saying farewell to all the servants, and returning again

and again for a last kiss to her aunt, May entered the carriage that was to convey her the first stage of her journey, amidst exclamations of admiration, affection, and regret, which demonstrations of kindly feeling were returned by her nodding to them so long as the house was in sight. When she was fairly on her way, she was quite ready to be interested by all she met with on the road; but Sir Lionel being absorbed in his own meditations, she was thrown upon herself for entertainment. He wished to go through to Paris at once; but when they reached Amiens, she began to complain of the fatigue of the journey, saying that she had not seen anything novel by the way, save the Boulogne fishwomen, and that she particularly wished to see Notre Dame d'Amiens. Sir Lionel was against so in the habit of indulging her wishes that, although his will, he was induced to change his plan, and she was pleased to find herself standing before the *façade* of the cathedral, listening to the novel sounds of busy life in a foreign country. Eager to see everything and to go everywhere, she felt it very tantalizing that Sir Lionel would not move about a little faster, and, outrunning his sluggish pace, entered the church alone.

The perspective produced by the long range of gigantic pillars charmed her. She had never before seen so fine a specimen of Gothic architecture, and was standing in one of the side chapels, thinking how its frivolous decorations destroyed the unity of the grand and beautiful edifice, when a gentleman, whose form did not seem unfamiliar to her, also entered and stood near her.

Taxing her memory as to where she had before seen him, she stood for a moment in abstraction, when supposing her to be contemplating a bedizened image of the Virgin, he remarked,

'Ah *malheureux! c'est presque un sacrilege!*'

Glad of some one with whom to exchange an idea, May smiled in acquiescence, and thus encouraged, he invited her attention to the nave of the church.

'It is one admirable poem!' he exclaimed, enthusiastically, and as if he thought he might as well give her further benefit from his local knowledge, stopped before a tomb, and pointing out the figure of an angel bending over a death's head, remarked, 'One can almost hear the sobs.' (May gazed with admiration.) 'and,' he added, 'it was here, in this enclosure, that Edward the Third of England took the oath to Philippe de Valois. At every step you take you tread on some illustrious tomb. Here is the *petite* Gresset; but—' and he shrugged his shoulders—'he is almost unnoticed among the large crowd of dead.'

Sir Lionel joined them.

'*Pardon, Monsieur,*' said the stranger, as if in apology for volunteering information.

Sir Lionel bowed politely, but knowing they had not much time to spare, soon left the cathedral. May looked sorry to leave her companion, who, observing it, added with kind courtesy,

'If Mademoiselle wishes to see the *monde*, and will follow to the end of the *Rue de Noyon*, and continue the way by the river, she will at once see all the busy life of the *ville*. *Pardon, Monsieur.*' And he again raised his hat.

Sir Lionel was not to be outdone in politeness, and such a raising of hats followed, that it seemed to be becoming a question who should leave off first. May's eyes sparkled with amusement. She no longer found a lack of novelty.

'There is something very courteous and unselfish in the manner of a polished, well-educated French gentleman,' remarked Sir Lionel, when they were again alone. 'It is a pity

we so rarely meet with them, except by introduction into the best society. Englishmen would do well to imitate their well-bred politeness and *dégagé* unembarrassed bearing.'

They followed the prescribed route, and by that means saw much more of what a foreigner wishes to see than they could have done without direction; for Sir Lionel was impatient to get on to Paris, and they had a very short time to spare before the train started thither. At Meurice's he was at home. The waiters knew just what he liked, Vincent knew the way of the house; and in spite of his wish to please May, he kept his eye fixed on Paris as his nearest anchoring-ground.

They were seated in the railway carriage awaiting its starting, when their stranger friend put his head in to it, as if in search of a vacant place.

Sir Lionel at once invited him to enter, and he readily accepted the invitation.

Finding that he too was bound for Paris, May congratulated herself on having a fellow-passenger who would point out to her all that there was of interest on the road. But she soon discovered that places of interest did not lay on their route, and was glad to amuse herself by listening to the conversation of the gentlemen.

It was but a skirmishing one, but it proved the stranger to be a man of large and varied information. Upon a remark of Sir Lionel's, that the Paris water did not agree with him, he gave an account of the springs in the neighbourhood, and their chemical properties. The subject of coal-fields was started; then followed a description of those of Liege and Valenciennes, of the geology of the country generally, and of the interesting forms of life being unfolded to posterity from bones found in the hill of Montmartre.

May made some inquiry as to the *flora* round Paris, and received a practical lesson in botany, good for future use. He described everything in so pleasant and clever a way as highly to interest her, and she was sorry to be reminded, by seeing the uninteresting suburbs of Paris looming into view, that she must soon part with one who had beguiled so pleasantly the tedium of the road.

'You speak English well,' said Sir Lionel, as they were about drawing to the end of their journey. 'I conclude you are no stranger in England.'

'I was there for eight years,' answered the gentleman; but he turned to the window, and began pointing out to May whatever he thought likely to interest her, in a way that gave Sir Lionel the impression that he did not wish to be further questioned.

When they reached the end of their journey Sir Lionel bade him adieu, frankly expressing a hope that he would not be kept long in the cold, uncomfortable waiting-room, and, leaving Vincent to clear the luggage, mounted a *voiture*, and drove with May through the gay streets of Paris.

'That's about as pleasant and intelligent a man as I ever met,' remarked Sir Lionel of their stranger friend: 'he's a sort of ambulating encyclopædia.'

May would have agreed with him, but she was too much taken up with what was going on around her to hear what he said. The gay outdoor life — women walking about without bonnets, and the glare, and glitter, and noise everywhere — especially astonished and amused her. What a change from her home at Scotswood!

As Sir Lionel knew Vincent would not have arrived with the luggage, he indulged her wish to drive round a little way, so that she had a full view of the *Boulevards* by gaslight before

entering the courtyard of their quiet hotel—*very quiet* and unpretending, compared to the giant houses of the same class now open to receive the vast crowd of visitors who make the French capital their resting-place on their way to other parts of the Continent.

There was no need for them to make a demand for rooms, for at the sight of Sir Lionel the waiters were telegraphed for by the clerk of the *bureau*, and they were at once shown to their quarters.

May was very tired, and lay down on a stiff, hard, velvet-covered sofa, waiting for Alsie, and wondering if every mantel-piece in France was furnished with exactly the same articles; and when her maid entered the room she found her eyes closing in spite of herself. Feeling that it would be luxurious to go to sleep, she asked Alsie to supply her with her toilet necessaries, and then to go and tell Sir Lionel she was too tired to go down again.

Alsie did as she was desired, but it was May's lot, if not to be killed with kindness, frequently to receive attentions she found very inconvenient; and just as she was falling off into an enjoyable slumber, the jingle of glasses, and an invitation to take some wine and water and biscuits, roused her again; but, once left to herself, she fell so fast asleep that she did not even hear Sir Lionel's weighty tread when he paid her a visit to assure himself that all was right with her.

Up in the morning long before Sir Lionel was stirring, she pressed Vincent into her service to accompany her in a walk to the *Champs Elysées*. Vincent was as much at home in Paris as his master, and a few minutes took them into the gardens, where *Zouaves* in their fanciful dresses, bonnetless *bonnes*, and quaint old-fashioned-looking children, such as May had seen in

pictures of a hundred years ago, constituted a sufficiently unhomelike aspect of things to be amusing; but when she reached the *Arç de Triomphe*, and was told a minute after that she was in the *Champs Elysées*, her surprise wonderfully amused the matter-of-fact old man-servant.

'Elysian Fields!' she exclaimed. 'A few stunted trees, and all this dust, with whirlabouts, and all the ugly *paraphernalia* of a fair! It is as much a misnomer as the Gate of Felicity at Constantinople.' *

As they were on their way back, she stood watching a man feeding some birds from his hand,† and seemed very disinclined to move, although Vincent more than once reminded her that his master would have rung his bell, and be angry at his non-attendance.

Sir Lionel was a man of fixed habits, and did not like to be put out of his way, and he would have been very angry at having rung his bell several times to no purpose; but, on hearing that May was the cause of the irregularity, he readily forgave it, and listened to her humorous remarks on the ponderous articles in use on the breakfast-table, and her account of what she had seen, with much amusement. After breakfast May was teased at the pertinacity with which he read the paper: she was too enterprizing to be content to lose any sights within reach, and his methodic precision was a real trial to her patience. He soon found that 'Galignani' must have less of his attention than heretofore, for her question 'Where shall we go first?' and

* The Paris of 1850 was very different from the Paris of 1865.

† At the sight of their old friend, who appeared at the same place regularly at the same time, these birds would congregate from different parts of the gardens, as surely as do the flight of pigeons in St. Mark's Square at Venice when the clock in the Campanile warns them that feeding-time has arrived.

her business-like arrangements for the day, showed him that, although this was her first visit, she was theoretically no stranger in Paris. He suggested that she would be able to see all there was to be seen in the city during her stay with Madame de Bernonville, and that they had better visit Versailles that day, and the next make their way south.

So it was arranged; and although they had only time to run through the vast palace of the French kings, Sir Lionel showed her much in which his own fancy had delighted—spots in the grounds which were memorable in history, and so far satisfied her as to excite her desire to go in search of fresh novelties. They left Paris at the earliest opportunity, and, after resting a night at Dijon and another at Lyons, they went on to Avignon. There May found the climate so lovely, the women so picturesque, and everything so 'delightfully' foreign, that she felt inclined for a long stay. The old palace of the Popes, grim and impenetrable as an unhewn rock, looked as if all kinds of cruelty might be perpetrated within its walls without coming to the knowledge of the outer world.

From there they went to Marseilles and on to Nice. On their way thither May's busy brain was not allowed to sleep: on one side of her was the storied Mediterranean, gently laving the rocky inleted shore, as if toyingly venturing to approach, and then retreating, abashed at its temerity; on the other, chaotic masses of rock, their colour variegated with an overgrowth of lichen, and forming valleys planted as olive and orange gardens. It was a memorable ride, and Nice, too, looked its best, with a full river-bed, its leathery foliage free of its usual dusty coat, and the glorious sapphire sky over all. What enthusiastic, dreamy girl of fifteen would not have been excited at finding herself for the first time in a land of figs,

pomegranates and oil, olive—where such expressions as 'sitting under one's own vine and fig tree,' and 'a lodge in a garden of cucumbers,' explain themselves? Certainly, not Miss May Bosanquet.

Letters from home were there awaiting them, and now May's heroism was put somewhat to the test.

In a private letter, Miss Bosanquet had begged her at once to join her friends in Paris, urging the request by saying that she should accept obedience to her wish in this respect as an evidence of love to herself.

With a strong impulse of affection to the dear aunt she had so lately left, May at once withdrew a petition she had previously made to accompany Sir Lionel into Italy, by intimating her wish to return to Paris at once.

Sir Lionel did not at first appear to hear what she said, for he was sitting deeply brooding over some communication he had himself received, murmuring between his teeth, 'Can his father be a party to this rascality?' Poor Sir Lionel! he was experiencing one of the bitterest causes of indignation! After heaping benefits on William Bryant for many years, he had turned traitor and liar, and was making it his pleasure to injure Sir Lionel's character in every way in his power.

May asked what was the matter.

'Sneak! blackguard!' replied Sir Lionel. 'Bryant reports I shot him deliberately.'

May coloured with astonishment, no less than with indignation. She had always thought him deficient in every manly and independent virtue; but that any one who had received continual benefits from another should take pleasure in doing them an injury was past her understanding.

She went up to Sir Lionel and kissed him — a thing she had

hardly been known to do before of her own free will, for she was chary in dispensing such favours.

Sir Lionel looked stung to the quick, and May inquired sympathetically, 'What could he do it for?'

'As a return for benefits received both social and substantial,' was the bitter reply.

May was quiet and thoughtful; and, turning to her, he said,

'And so you are willing to leave me, eh?'

'Not willing to leave you,' returned May, feeling more affectionate to Sir Lionel than was her wont; 'but Auntie thinks it will be better for me to be doing something, and that I waste too much time — at least, I suppose that is why she wishes me to return at once.'

When alone, it was Sir Lionel's habit to breakfast at noon, saunter into libraries and print-shops, gossip with artists in the studios and galleries until dinner, and doze over his wine and newspapers until bed-time, so that it was no small effort to him to keep pace with her inclination for locomotion; and finding it to be her wish to return, with a mild feeling of relief he acquiesced in her decision.

Accordingly, after necessary preparation, they set off on their return journey, and arrived at St. Jullien's without encountering anything of a nature to invite comment.

This little run, short as it had been, had been very beneficial to May. It had taught her practically the good to be derived from the acquisition of foreign languages and from the study of history, mythology, and architecture; and she arrived at St. Jullien's with her taste for study considerably sharpened.

The Hotel St. Jullien was an ancient building — quite an architectural gem — the date of its erection some time in the sixteenth century; one of several houses that had been formerly

occupied by the *ancienne noblesse* of France. Unlike most Paris houses, it could boast a garden and an avenue of trees, and was altogether well suited for the purpose to which it was appropriated.

The hall was very unique, and lighted from above in a way that enabled its arabesques and wood carvings to be seen to advantage. Some pillars supported a gallery, from which doors opened on to the various sleeping-chambers. Madame de Bernonville was proud of showing her house, and delighted in the high-sounding distinctions accorded to its various apartments. *That* was *one* of her weaknesses, and another was her peculiar predilection for the English aristocracy.

Sir Lionel, therefore, was received by her '*en grande tenue*;' and May was not a little astonished to find herself ushered from the *salle d'attente* to the *salle d'introduction* into the presence of a lady, who seemed to be doing the queen, supported by two of her *dames d'honneur*.

After making arrangements with Sir Lionel, and expressing her conviction that May would be charmed with *la belle France* — that she would find it impossible to be *triste* — as the ladies who formed the *coterie* at St. Jullien's were *toujours, toujours gai*; she led them up the *escalier d'honneur*, to point out the *extrême convenance* of the *dormitoires*, and informed them that her sisters, Lucille and Eulalie, the maids of honour, were always ready to afford the *demoiselles* any domestic assistance, while she confined herself to the literary department and to showing her young friends something of the *monde*.

May was wondering all this time why Helen and Frances did not make their appearance, and at last made bold to ask for them.

'One moment!' returned Madame de Bernonville. 'Made-

moiselle Alsie' (poor Alsie looked quite bewildered) 'shall have a little *apartement* quite close to Madame Sylvie, *ma petite amie*, one opening into that of her friend, so that all will be *en suite*.'

Nothing could be more satisfactory than the plan proposed, but May was impatient to see Helen and Frances; and, in recognition of her impatience, Madame at once introduced them into the *salle d'etude*, where May received a joyous welcome from her friends; but, as Madame did not leave the room, Sir Lionel very soon took his departure, promising to see them the next day.

It was all very strange to May; and, as she heard Lucille and Eulalie screaming their orders for the disposition of her luggage, she said to herself, 'Lucille and Eulalie! There isn't much in a name after all!'

CHAPTER XV.

'There, Miss, I bear no malice—'t isn't in me.
I know I acted wrongly; still I've tried
What I could say in my excuse, to show
The devil 's not all devil.'

THE day following May's arrival at St. Jullien's found her on the *qui vive* of expectation for Sir Lionel's re-appearance. She was anticipating the pleasure of introducing her friends to some of the 'lions' of Paris under his *chaperonship;* and, moreover, some little mitigation of the circumstance that she was severed from her home ties would, perhaps, be more acceptable to her than, from her unchecked mirth and gay spirits, a casual observer might be led to suppose. But the day sped on, and no Sir Lionel arrived; the second, and still no news. She grew restless and unhappy; and Madame de Bernonville, finding that while this uncertainty lasted there was no probability of her settling to study, sent a messenger to Meurice's, to inquire when they might hope to see Sir Lionel at St. Jullien's.

The message returned was to the effect that he had only stayed at the hotel one night, and that he had left unexpectedly, early the next morning.

When this news was delivered to May, she looked bewildered.

For Sir Lionel to put her entirely out of his memory was so contrary to all her past experience as to be quite beyond her comprehension. Her temperament was not the best calculated to bear suspense, and she went about looking desponding and desolate, feeling out of harmony with herself and all the world, until Helen feared that she had ventured upon a mode of life that would not suffice to make her happy, and began to regret that she had joined them. She and Frances had become quite accustomed to the change, and were sedulously applying themselves to their daily occupations — she finding an antidote to all regret or *ennui* in her 'great happiness principle,' work!

One day, when they were busy as usual, May came up to her, exclaiming, fretfully,

'Do, Helen, leave off for awhile and talk to me! You look so provokingly, so superbly serene, that one would think never a cloud passed over you.'

There was a spice of petulance in her tone, and Helen, pained at seeing her so unlike herself, tried to do as she was bidden, and moving her materials to make room for her at her table, said,

'Will you sit here, and try commencing to study in earnest? I have found the patience and painstaking necessary to overcome a difficulty in a lesson, help to beguile the waiting time, when I have been anxious or unhappy about anything.'

'I should not have thought you had ever been anxious,' said May. 'I did try an abstract, but it was such skimble-skamble stuff, that to save my credit for sanity I thought I had better leave off. I began my letter to Auntie, but I do not want to send her the "Diary of an Ennuyée," so desisted.'

'Try your unfailing specific, open air,' suggested Helen. 'Frances will go out with you.'

Frances immediately rose, as if only waiting May's permission to bear her company; and the two girls set off for a walk in the garden. The prospect before them was somewhat drear—a long vista of trees, entirely denuded of foliage; but they paced up and down, May enjoying the revivifying air, and talking enthusiastically of the Paradise she had lost, and speculating as to when it would be regained.

'Helen says it is best not to think of what we have lost, but of what we can gain in the way of knowledge,' was the simple rejoinder.

'Most sensible advice! correct, and worthy her goddessship,' returned May, a little sarcastically. 'Perhaps, had I not been so ignominiously disregarded, I should have been more inclined to listen to it; but was ever any one treated as I have been?'

'I am so sorry!' said Frances. 'I wish you could feel as happy as we do. I think knowing Dr. Milman makes Helen happy—I hope you will soon know him too.'

'What does he do to increase her felicity?' asked May; 'she always had that quiet manner.'

Frances felt there was a difference, but could not describe the 'character of the difference,' and merely said,

'I think you will understand why she may feel happier when you know Dr. Milman.'

'What does he do? What does he say?' persisted May.

Frances coloured at the idea of playing Mentor; but the wish that May should understand what had given her and her sister pleasure overcame her timidity, and she said, hesitatingly,

'One thing—the principal thing I remember—that ought to make us happy, was, that if we looked upon God as our Father, (and He calls Himself our Father) we might rest quite safely in His hands, not troubling ourselves very much about anything

except how we could best please Him; because as He is good, and great, and wise, His goodness would make Him wish for our happiness, His greatness would enable Him to fulfil His wish, and His wisdom would decide what is best for us. I think Helen understood what he meant, and that that makes her happy.'

'What a dear quaint thing you are!' said May, feeling interested in Frances' theory of happiness in spite of herself. 'I am better now,' she added, 'so perhaps we may as well go in. My spirits are like soap-bubbles — never will rise well in the close air.'

Frances readily acquiesced, and they went into the house together. In the hall they met a servant with letters, and May was soon in happy possession of one from her aunt, with an enclosure from her brother. Reginald's was the first to be opened; and, as she rapidly perused it, she said, colouring,

'Reginald is ordered to the Crimea, or, at least, to be in readiness to go. They are sending out all the troops they can command. There is no chance of his being spared. Oh, Helen! if—' She did not give substance to her thoughts, but added, 'You don't know what it would be to me. You must know him to understand.'

Helen looked inquiringly, and asked if it were the brother they once saw at the abbey?

'My only one, and one by himself,' returned May, moving away, piqued that she with whom she was so intimate should not remember that hers was her only brother.

Frances detected her chagrin, and said, interestedly,

'Do you not remember how much you liked him, Helen? The evening he came to fetch May from the abbey, you talked to him all the while he was in the room.'

'It was a very few minutes,' returned Helen, evasively, while she contemplated steadily the miniature of a Madonna, which she had begged Madame de Bernonville's permission to copy.

'Helen never wastes her praise,' said May, no longer trying to suppress her pique.

Upon which charge, Helen coloured deeply; and May, feeling she had been too easily offended, put her arm round her neck, and said, penitently,

'I have been disagreeable to you all day. Can you forgive me just this once? "A braver place in my heart's love hath no one than yourself." My heart is white as milk towards you, black though it may have looked. If I *do* think Reginald the 'Gem of the East,' the 'Glory of Britain,' (she playfully alluded to the names of some geraniums on a stand), 'I think you are *almost* a match for him.'

Helen kissed her, and said, in a satisfying voice,

'It was quite natural that you should think my remark cold. How is Miss Bosanquet?'

'I have not read,' said May, resuming her packet, 'but here is a compliment for you. Reginald says he is very glad that I have at least one sensible companion—*that means you!* It is in his letter to Aunt Cam. Now for what darling Auntie has to say.'

And she sat down, handling her missive in a way that might be interpreted as an apology for having given her brother's the first attention.

The letter was very long, and full of home detail and tender concern for her happiness; but it was only by glancing rapidly through it, and learning that Sir Lionel had been unexpectedly obliged to leave Paris, that induced a composure sufficient to enable her to wade patiently through the closely-written sheet.

Slight as the consolation was, it was something to know that her aunt was aware of the fact that had so puzzled her, and that it did not seem sufficiently important in her mind to require remark; and, thus reassured, she entered with interest into all the minor details contained in the letter. Among others, that Phœbe Burton had sat a good deal with Miss Bosanquet since May's absence — that she was a very attentive, good girl, and learning to work warm useful things, to be sent out by the 'mission ship;' that Dame Froggatt had sent up a pair of stockings of her own knitting, remarkable for bulk and warmth, 'for little Miss's parcel;' and that Miss Coleridge was going to have an annual sale of work in her drawing-room, the proceeds of which were to be sent to the Moravians, and that not only was she going to help herself, but that she had commended the society to an eminent physician of large practice in London, who promised to have a basket of clothes, of warm, coarse materials, standing in his waiting-room, labelled 'Work for the Moravian Mission,' so that the poor might help with work, and the rich be reminded that there was such a society wanting friends. This part of the letter she read aloud, and she afterwards remarked,

'I expect we shall have a capital stock of things, and if we do send anything worth the sending, it will be just owing to Frances' happy thought. I never heard of a "mission ship" until she spoke of it.'

'It is an instance in a small way of great results hingeing upon trifling causes,' said Helen, thoughtfully. And Frances added,

'I know now what Dr. Milman meant when he said, "we should not be deterred from doing what we *can* do, because we cannot do more; that *whatever* we find to do, we should do it."'

May's opinion wanted.—P. 199.

Helen said, happily,

'If the move made is in the right direction, there is no knowing how useful God may make the smallest act done in obedience to His command.'

Here the carriage was announced, and May, cheered by her letter, tripped out of the room, brightened in spirits, and, linking her arm affectionately in that of Frances, made her way up stairs to prepare for a drive.

Just as they were about to open the door leading to their room, Julie de Chateaupaille, one of the French girls, invited them to look at a bonnet and dress that had just come from the milliners'; and May saying in an undertone to Frances, 'They are for ever talking about their wardrobes,' the two girls followed Julie to her room.

'Decide for me which is most pretty,' she said, with an earnest, anxious face, that struck May as curiously ludicrous. 'Gabrielle says *this*,' pointing to a bright-coloured *moiré* trimmed with blond; 'I say *this* is the most becoming.'

'This reminds me of the one the Queen of Spain made a present to the Virgin,' said May, gravely. 'The bonnet is almost as *recherché* as that one in tortoiseshell, presented by the Queen of the Sandwich Islands to our Queen,' she added, looking to Frances for applause, and trusting to her English to disguise the invidiousness of her comparisons to the ears of Julie.

Frances averted her eyes, but Gabrielle, who had an answering taste for mischief, laughingly encouraged her, and May continued,

'The Empress cannot more than match this — the Empress of Hayti, I mean. Allow me to suggest a head-dress of cassowary feathers, a girdle of jaw-bones, bracelets of birds' bills,

and a necklace of cowries, and you will have a perfect Court dress.'

The merry twinkling in her eye betrayed her spirit of mischief, and Julie retorted angrily,

'My country has not need to borrow fashions of savages. It is only the stupid English who have not taste for themselves.'

'Think of a dandy walking down Pall Mall with a monkey-jacket and a tobacco-pipe, or a shirt-collar and a pair of spurs,' returned May, colouring, but laughing.

Gabrielle and Frances joined in her merriment; but Julie, boiling with indignation, said fiercely,

'You are a savage yourself! I am not going to Court, and when I do, I don't want your advice.'

'Only to court M. de Brignola,' whispered Gabrielle.

It is very probable that Julie would not have said what she did say had she been speaking in her own language; but May, no less astonished than concerned at the spirit she had roused, left the room, saying,

'As we have *done*—that is, *done mischief*—we had better go.'

Frances looked very much distressed, and May, doubtful as to her own freedom from blame in the matter, felt it a relief to set the true state of the case before Helen, whom she was constrained to regard as an oracle, useful to be consulted in an emergency. She found her dressed, waiting for them, and told her her story quite free from disingenuous suppressions, but at the same time taking care to represent the temptation to which she had been exposed, by mimicking Julie's anxious earnestness of expression to the life.

'You got just what you deserved,' said Helen, smiling. 'I am supposing you to be asking my opinion. Your talent for impersonation alone might justify her supposition that you be-

longed to one of the wild tribes. I have heard that their talent for mimicry is remarkable.'

'You are severe,' said May, laughing, and beginning to think she might have been to blame.

'In ancient times, when comedians took upon themselves to deride their acquaintance, they found it necessary to wear a vizard to hide their blushing,' returned Helen, smiling; 'but you seem to have been bold enough to dispense with any such arrangement.'

'It was just fun,' said May, apologetically.

'Not to the subject of the joke,' persisted Helen. 'However unintentionally, you have got yourself into a dilemma, and you must get out of it as best you can.'

'What would you do?' asked May, feeling her position to be a very uncomfortable one. 'I have never quarrelled with any one before.'

'You cannot remove the impression that you were laughing at her. All you can do is to show her you are sorry to have offended, and anxious for a reconciliation,' suggested Helen. 'What do you say to giving her a rose off your tree? She would understand your meaning, and be pleased with the aid to her adornment.'

'My rose!' exclaimed May, deprecatingly. 'I should expect it to groan at such a misappropriation. I must confess to a preference to dispose of my roses elsewhere.'

'You ought to punish yourself in the matter,' persisted Helen; 'but, looking at your sacrifice in a selfish point of view, you will gain by the transaction. One always feels more satisfied by making reparation for wrong, even in little matters.'

'I'll tell her she is not like a savage, for she doesn't like a joke,' interrupted May. 'You have just Aunt Cam's and Regi-

nald's exalted mode of looking at things,' she added, 'and, as I have a respect for their opinion, individually and collectively, I shall think about it.'

'You will be happier for not leaving it unadjusted,' returned Helen.

They went down to the carriage, which had long been kept waiting. Sylvie and Alsie took it in turns to drive with them: it was Alsie's turn to-day, and, after receiving directions from the young ladies, she told the coachman to drive to St. Cloud. Their way lay through a great part of old Paris, and May was very speculative and inquiring as to the scenes that had been enacted in the different localities. Her knowledge of history supplied her with a good deal of material for conversation; but Helen was highly amused to hear with what readiness her fancy filled up particulars that fact failed to furnish; and they were very merry and talkative.

On their return drive, the coachman was walking the horses slowly, when they noticed a skulking figure dodging in and out between the trees at the side of the road, crouching now and then as if fearful of being seen, and as if knowing that he had no business there. His appearance was forlornly wild, but there was a gentlemanly air about him in spite of it, and May was surprised to see him come towards the carriage, making signs as if he were starving with hunger, but was ashamed of being seen asking alms.

With a natural impulse she felt for her purse, resolving in her mind whether she could offer any one so much like a gentleman anything but gold, but she found she had left her purse at home; and the man, finding he was about to be disappointed, became so importunate, that his tone sounded to the girls like one of intimidation rather than of supplication. Helen, not

liking her largesse to be the result of fear, hesitated to provide what May found lacking, whereupon the man held on to the carriage, as if determined his petition should not be unheeded. There was a desperate look about him — 'the asking eye of hunger'—which Helen was observing, when a sharp cry brought the carriage to a stand. A wheel had gone over the man's foot, and he sat down and seemed to be suffering acutely.

It now became a question what was to be done. They could not leave him there, helpless and unaided. The coachman proposed that they should drive on and send assistance, but this suggestion did not satisfy them, and they at last decided that he should be lifted into the carriage, and that they would walk to Dr. Milman's, and ask him what they ought to do.

After obtaining the man's address, and desiring Alsie to do all she could for him, they set off to the doctor's, and luckily found him at home; but, as it was an engaged morning with him, they were obliged to be satisfied with a promise that he would go and look into the matter later in the day. A *voiture* was called for them, and they were soon at home again.

Madame was not at all pleased at seeing them arrive in a public conveyance; such proceeding she declared to be quite '*contre les règles*,' and that she would have to make arrangements that her young ladies did not drive except with her, as they were not to be trusted. 'What would my Lord Agramont say to see them driving through Paris in a public vehicle? Such constant visiting and communication with Dr. Milman would be likely to interfere with study.' She was evidently angry and offended.

Helen and Frances looked concerned; but May, an enemy to anything like restraint, jumped up, and, as she closed the door, stamped her feet, saying,

'My word! such scandalous oppression
Would put an elephant in a passion.
Laws for *little* folks are made.'

Helen smiled, and hearing a noise of approaching feet in the passage, said,

'Remember, you have to do penance.'

'What was it I had to say?' asked May. 'Something about —' but she was stopped by the entrance of Julie, sailing into the room in full dress, visibly impressed with her own magnificence.

May involuntarily thought of the Makalolo ladies, who do not allow themselves to feel the weight of their ornaments, even though their ankles be chafing with heavy rings; and Helen compared her to the overburdened young lady in Madame de Genlis's '*Toilette de Bal.*'

There was something in her air that made May's task difficult; and Frances, not giving her time to change her mind, whispered,

'Do not laugh when you give it her.'

'My face shall be quite expressionless,' returned May, turning to cut a pretty spray from her rose tree. Then she went forward with it, and, addressing Mademoiselle de Chateaupaille, said, 'I want you to accept this, in proof that you are no longer angry at my nonsense to-day.'

Her manner was less gracious than her words; but Julie, thinking only of the *recherché* finish the rose would make to her *toilette*, especially now that flowers were so scarce, was quite indifferent as to the spirit in which the offering was made, and accepted it eagerly, exclaiming,

'*Mille remercimens! Que c'est charmante! que c'est rare!* I am soon angry, but I soon forgive.' And at the same time

placed the rose before her to view the effect on her dress, and then made her way out of the room, saying something about going to arrange her *corsage.*

'Disgusting!' ejaculated May. 'My attention was quite supererogatory; I had better have bought her a copy of the book entitled "*Remedio per Curare la Vanità Feminile,*" that was dedicated to the Princess Borghese—she was oblivious to everything but the effect of the rose upon her dress.'

Helen treated Mademoiselle de Chateaupaille's infirmities with the same sort of consideration she would give to those of a half-witted person, and was not at all surprised at the manner that had so roused May's indignation, and said by way of consolation,

'At all events, you are free now to dismiss the occurrence from your mind.'

'Who is this *bel esprit* the girls talk about, and dress themselves up to receive?' asked May: 'his name sounds Italian, —Brignola.'

'All I can tell you is, that he is a gentlemanly man, and very superior to the general run of professors,' returned Helen. 'I hear he is not always in Paris, but that when he is, Madame de Bernonville has so high an opinion of his merits, that she thinks it worth while to secure his attendance, even for a short time. We have only had one lesson from him; then he chose history for his subject, and I thought treated it in a very clever, original way.'

'Helen and he were mutually pleased with each other,' interrupted Frances. 'He told Helen that, if it were the custom in England for ladies to fill the university chair, as is, or used to be, the case in Seville, she might hope to do so with honour.'

'Every one finds out that Helen is clever,' returned May.

'*You* will have to work a little harder than you are working at present, to fulfil his requirements,' said Helen, finding May's do-nothing habit rather a hindrance to work. 'Can't you get on with your abstract?'

'My intellect is still very languid,' said May, comically; 'and this writing in French teases me dreadfully.'

'*L'art d'écrire ne se prend pas tout d'un coup*,' said Helen, sympathizingly. 'You should not be discouraged, especially as you have to overcome the additional difficulty of writing in a language not your own.'

'It is weary work at present,' said May; 'but as everybody thinks it is worth while taking any amount of trouble to win an expression of approbation from this *beau cavalier*, I suppose I must follow the lead.'

Madame had given May an abstract to write, that M. de Brignola might judge what she could do.

'I would much rather win Dr. Milman's praise,' said Frances, thoughtfully.

'I hope M. de Brignola is not going to disappoint my *beau* idealization?' asked May.

Frances replied that she liked M. de Brignola very much, but that she should value Dr. Milman's praise more, whereupon May was persistent in her inquiries as to the reason of her preference.

'Tell May why I would rather have Dr. Milman's praise,' said Frances, appealing for help to Helen.

Anxious that her sister should learn to speak with less timidity, Helen replied that she would much rather she should be the interpreter of her own feelings on the subject. Did she mean because Dr. Milman viewed things from a higher platform, that he would think moral victories deserved praise, rather than

victory over a difficult passage in a lesson, which one overcomes merely to gratify one's own taste and inclination?

'That is just what I do mean,' said Frances, gratefully; 'to overcome such a disinclination as May felt to-day to apologize to Mademoiselle Julie, because she knew it was right.'

'If you talk in this way, I shall become quite inflated,' returned May, colouring. 'I differ from you, if you think it is not a moral victory to control my impatience at the present time. As to my condescension to Julie' (May could not be troubled with giving her full name) 'I believe I just did it for peace sake, and out of regard to what I felt darling Auntie would approve, and because Helen suggested it;' adding, as she saw Frances look disappointed, 'Now, Fan, you need not say a word, for your face says, as plainly as words could possibly say, *that motive is not a fit one;* but I do not intend to accept the challenge to argue it out with you. I never was what is called a *good* girl, a consistent girl, or an industrious girl. My "high resolves have always looked down on my slumbering acts," and the last few days especially I have felt to want complete internal repair, my heart to be taken out and cleansed of all its black spots, and then put back again in its place—a plan adopted by Mahomet, or his followers, I forget which.'

She was half crying as she made the confession, and both the girls regarded her affectionately.

Here the coachman sent in word, 'that he would like to speak to one of the young ladies,' and she ran out of the room to hear that Pierre Moreau, the man over whose foot the carriage wheels had passed, was taken to the hospital, that one toe was smashed to a pulp, and that he would require care for some time, so that Dr. Milman had considered it better that he should go where he would be properly attended; that the

man had sent his thanks to the young ladies for their humane treatment of him, and that he hoped he should soon be able to come and thank them himself, and begged they would believe that nothing but dire necessity would have led him to intrude himself on them as he had done.

'That isn't the message of a common man,' said May. 'Suppose he should turn out to be a noble in exile? I am glad he has gone to the hospital: Alsie and Sylvie can take him all sorts of things.'

CHAPTER XVI.

'Heavily the summer passed—
To her a joyless one, expecting still
Some tidings.'

WE will leave May and her friends in full work, enjoying the advantages for study that were afforded them under Madame de Bernonville's roof, and turn our inquiries to the gentle lady at Scotswood, who has no less claim upon our interest. She has been suffering more than usual since the departure of May and Sir Lionel, and been feeling very lonely; for, except an occasional visit from kind old Miss Coleridge, who now and then accompanied her brother on his professional visits, her almost sole companion has been North, a superior person for her station, trustworthy and kind, but entirely deficient in those ornamental qualities that would render her companionable to Miss Bosanquet. As we have seen in a letter to May, she had had Phœbe Burton to sit with her sometimes, preferring a young thing about her rather than be dependent on the prosaic companionship of her maturer nurse; and, happily, Phœbe loved the gentle lady who had befriended her from childhood, and devoted herself to her service with affectionate loyalty. Miss Bosanquet had never recovered her

usual serenity of mind since the time the suspicion pressed itself upon her that Sir Lionel had compromised himself in some way; for since then her suspicion had become assurance —she knew that he had gone away ashamed of the part he had taken in the election proceedings. His conduct struck her as cowardly and discreditable, and she fretted as the facts of the case became manifest.

The report widely set afloat was, that William Bryant was in possession of secrets that, if brought to light, would cause Sir Lionel great inconvenience, and that he had shot him *accidentally* with the hope of avoiding any undesirable *éclaircissement;* which report appeared to refer not only to the bribery and corrupt practices connected with the election, but to some trespass of deeper dye.

Happily Miss Bosanquet considered the more serious charge a malevolent fabrication, too absurd to gain general credence; but, while knowing that her cousin kept abroad for want of courage to meet the slanders that were rife, she felt him to be deservedly a subject for suspicion and comment.

None the less distressed to hear him maligned because she felt he deserved it, she became abstracted and anxious, and suspense seemed to be sapping the little vigour that remained in her already delicate constitution.

'Shall I draw your sofa to the window?' asked Phœbe one morning, on seeing her sick friend looking sad. 'The rain has made everything look so pleasant! The trees seem to have come out all at once.'

Miss Bosanquet acquiesced, with thanks for the kind thought, and allowed her sofa to be moved to where she could take in a wide view of the surrounding country. A few days had served to alter the face of Nature—trees, shrubs, and herbage were all

of a lovely delicate green; and she sat thinking of how rapidly the leaves of the chestnuts had burst from their snug, warm winter envelopes, and admiring the Wisdom and Power that controls all things according to the beneficence of His will. Feeling the room oppressive, she was reaching her hand to turn the handle of one of the French windows, when Argus gave a discontented bark, which was echoed loudly by the sporting dogs in their kennels. At the same time a servant entered to replenish the fire, and Miss Bosanquet inquired what the dogs were barking at.

The man replied that he did not know, except it might be at young Mr. Bryant and his friends. 'The dogs seemed to think they were after no good, or else it was they disliked Father Mulooly's black dress.'

There was more under the man's reply than appeared on the surface, and it set his mistress musing. The window was a little open, and she overheard the conversation between some gardeners, who were engaged close by removing the hardy plants from the conservatories.

'They remind me for all the world of black cats, skulking and stealing about. It be just an excuse, that young rascal coming up here to inquire for the master. *He* knows well enough he ben't here; and what's more, I believe it be none other than he that has spread them reports, for all he seems so fair. Some say he was wild because the young Miss was took away, or that the master did not take him with him to furrin parts.'

At this point Phœbe re-entered the room, and immediately detecting the subject of conversation, went to the window, and asked if she had not better shut it.

'I think not: the air is pleasant,' said Miss Bosanquet, in a despondent tone. 'How pretty your flowers are!' alluding to a

basket of anemones and primroses, with a sprig of blackthorn arranged for a handle.

Phœbe had brought them from the wood: they looked so fresh, she thought Miss Bosanquet would like them, and she told her so.

'I do like them very much,' said the lady. 'I suppose there is not any hawthorn out yet? May often belies its name,' she added, smiling. 'I am not sure that I did not hear the cuckoo.'

Phœbe had put her basket on the table, and Miss Bosanquet was content to lie and admire the flowers at a distance, listening to the hum of newly awakened life outside, while Phœbe went to fetch her work. When she returned, the girl's eyes were sparkling with pleasure, and Miss Bosanquet inquired what had pleased her.

'I 've got a letter from Alsie, ma'am, and she seems so very happy with Mrs. Sylvie and the young ladies,' she added, curtseying; and as she handled the letter as if wishing to communicate more of its contents, Miss Bosanquet inquired if she might read it. The request was granted, and she learned from the communication that upon the whole Alsie was very well content with her situation, although the servants did 'scream awful;' that she thought it looked 'very grand' for each servant to have a bottle of wine placed on the table for her dinner, but, for her part, she liked 'good home-brewed better;' that it was wonderful to see how Miss May did study, and the heaps of books she used, and how beautiful she did look when Madame took her out with her.

Miss Bosanquet returned the letter, and after a few moments' silence said,

'Phœbe, I want you to give your serious attention to some-

thing I am going to say,' and explaining the nature of a promise, she concluded by asking if she thought she might be intrusted to keep one.

A little awe-stricken at the solemn style of address, the girl replied that 'she was *sure* she might,' whereupon Miss Bosanquet continued,

'I do not wish your sister's address to be known, and I want you to promise me to keep it secret. They do not write at the lodge, so that there will be no difficulty. You have not told any one?'

Phœbe looked thoughtful, and replied that 'one day, when she was going to put her letter in the post, the young lady at Dr. Coleridge's met her, and took the letter from her hand, saying that Miss May's address was just what she wanted.'

'Still, I say, do not speak of it elsewhere,' said Miss Bosanquet, looking vexed. 'Give me my writing-case, and then you may leave me a little while.'

Phœbe did as she was desired, and Miss Bosanquet with great effort arranged herself for writing. Some sudden thought had suggested to her the desirability of putting May on her guard against receiving visitors; and she wrote to that effect, making her meaning more clear by distinctly warning her against holding any correspondence with William Bryant on any plea whatever, and suggesting that, in case he called at St. Jullien's inquiring Sir Lionel's address, she should not only refuse to see him, but to give him any information on any subject—advising her, at the same time, not to speak of the admonition to any one.

It will be remembered that we left May struggling to overcome the depression induced by Sir Lionel's cavalier treatment of her, and preparing for her first lesson from a master distinguished as a favourite among the little *coterie* at St. Jullien's.

Judge of her surprise then, when, instead of being ushered into the presence of an interesting stranger, she found herself in the still more interesting presence of the travelling companion who had so pleasantly beguiled the time on the way between Amiens and Paris! When she made the discovery, her face flushed with pleasure, and as he courteously inquired after Sir Lionel, she felt as if he were almost an old friend. After receiving a few lessons from him, he was looked up to by her as an oracle of wisdom and learning. He so stirred her enthusiasm for knowledge that Alsie was not the only one who expressed surprise at Miss May's devotion to her books. Although seldom giving her his address, Sir Lionel wrote to her occasionally, desiring that she would have everything that she wanted, and see all that was to be seen in and around Paris; so that, puzzled though she was as to the reason why she should be kept in ignorance of his whereabouts, the home sickness, which had been at first so overwhelming, had been by degrees considerably allayed. Madame made the most of Sir Lionel's wish that she should see Paris. She liked to be seen at public places with the beautiful English girl, whom she took care should always be dressed in the most *distingué* style, and not unfrequently asked M. de Brignola to accompany them, as in his society pleasure and instruction were combined—his varied knowledge of subjects and circumstances giving interest to his companionship. On these occasions he always appropriated May as his especial charge, paying her attentions in a delicate and tender way, very acceptable to the somewhat lonely girl.

Such was the state of circumstances when Miss Bosanquet's admonitory note arrived. Early one morning May had drawn a table to her bed-side on which to place her books, thinking

to secure a quiet hour before the house was astir, when Helen surprised her by a visit.

'I am glad you have changed your mind as to sleep being welcome to take you from yourself, and that books answer the purpose better,' she said, cheerfully.

'I do not like to tax his patience more than I can help,' said May. 'I believe *he* thinks a little ossification has taken place here,' she added, pointing to the place where she had some idea her brain ought to be. 'Stupidity must seem so very stupid to him, for no one ever had such a lucid way of explaining things.'

'I don't think you need take *his* care upon you,' returned Helen, feeling it would not be very trying to bear with May, however super-eminent any one's talents might be.

'But one's pride is touched at being taken for one of the noddy or booby tribe,' continued May, holding out her hand for a letter that she knew to be for her. 'An enclosure from Reginald!' she exclaimed. 'Stay and hear the news,' she added, as Helen was about to take her departure. 'This was written as he was crossing from Fort St. Angelo to the mainland; they are under orders to leave Malta for the seat of war!' And she read on quietly for a time, then said seriously, 'I cannot fancy Reginald slaughtering his fellow-creatures, and I don't like to think of it. I wonder how it was he chanced to be a soldier? I don't think he likes it. I have heard him say that he gets very tired of barrack life, and condemn it as an idle one; but what an alternative! He tells me not to be at all anxious about him, but what might I not as well try to do?' Here her voice failed, and she buried her head in her pillow. Helen stooped and kissed her. May thought she heard a suppressed sob, but when she looked up her friend's face was quite as calm as usual. 'I am always

troubling you with my griefs; it must be very tiresome to be teased in this way about people you don't know;' but some freemasonry telling her that she had her friend's full sympathy, she laid her head on her shoulder and wept. After indulging for a few seconds, she made an effort to recover herself, and remarked, 'They used to say that Dame Fortune made me her special pet; now she seems to be making sport of me. Everything seems happening miserably.'

'Not quite everything,' said Helen; 'even now "the blue of heaven is larger than the cloud:" your brother feels he is safe under all circumstances.'

May sighed a little troubled sigh. Sympathetic as she felt Helen to be, she could not speak to her unrestrainedly, for her aunt's letter warned her to secrecy. Never having been before thus burthened, she felt a secret weigh heavily,—heavily in more senses than one, for the necessity of it was a reflection on Sir Lionel's honour, and the thought that he could not be free from blame distressed her sadly. During the time of dressing Alsie wondered what was troubling her usually gay young mistress; but when May went down to breakfast Helen was prepared to read her a glowing account of the scenery of the Bosphorus, and by degrees her spirits revived.

'Wherever there is anything interesting to be seen, Reginald would be sure to find it,' she said, affectionately. 'Perhaps it is his taste for the beautiful that makes him so delightful a companion. I remember when some young officers were talking of the monotonous lines of wall at Malta, and saying that there was not a thing interesting in the place, he laughingly reminded them of the pretty grey and green lizards that dart in and out of the stones, glancing in the sunlight; of the walks they had had to the remains of some temples said to have been built by

the Phœnicians; and a place where a ship from Alexandria, with Paul on board, brought the Gospel to the island. I believe he thinks it is *right* to make the best of things—I mean that it is wrong to look at the dark side. Heigho! for the air of the hills and a gallop on Daylight!' she added, as she felt how black everything was looking in her eyes just then. 'I believe *I* am constitutionally unfitted for an indoor life, and that is why I so misbehave myself. I wish it was M. de Brignola's day: it is so horrid to dance when you are not inclined, and by daylight, too; but I suppose it would be *contre les règles* not to be delighted at the appearance of the *aimable* Skipjack'—(a dancing master she thought fit to compare to a wire-worm).

May's spirits were very elastic—she was by no means of a moody turn of mind; and she went for her books, and spread them on the table, as if resolved to set diligently to work; but a note was handed to Helen which gave rise to a discussion instead.

It was from Dr. Milman, asking them 'if they would help him to entertain some of the poor of his congregation one evening in the following week?'

Frances' face beamed with pleasure at the proposal, and, turning to May, she said,

'I do hope you will go with us this time. There always seems something to prevent it. I do not think that Madame can like you to go.'

'She thinks I shall not be *bien amusée*,' said May, 'and that I do better going with her to see some of the sights. She says you only go to read the Bible.'

'We do not always,' said Frances.

Helen winced a little to hear sight-seeing and Bible-reading placed thus side by side, but remarked, seriously,

'If not amused, we may surely be interested to know what

God has seen fit to reveal to us. The only effectual argument to induce the savage tribes of Africa to read, is to tell them that the Bible is the word of God. They feel it is their duty to know the revelation from their Father in heaven. Why should our curiosity be less than theirs, or should we be less alive to a sense of duty?'

'We seem to have taken a great interest in savages lately,' laughed May. 'I agree with Madame that there is a great deal in the Bible that is incomprehensible. Reginald made it more intelligible to me than any one else I ever heard explain it.'

'But there is so much that is practical,' said Helen. 'The Jews must have felt that when they presented their kings with the books of the law. If you remember, kings had to copy the books of the law twice, and their subjects once. For myself, I would inscribe it in letters of gold, as the Mohammedans do their Koran. It teaches such pure morality, to say nothing of the Gospel of salvation—such high principles of action.'

'M. de Brignola says that, as it was not written in a language commonly spoken, it is safer not to read it, except with those who are authorized and able to explain it,' said May. 'The notion strikes me as sensible.'

Helen coloured at detecting an influence already at work, against which Dr. Milman had put her on her guard, and asked,

'What would your brother say? You value his opinion.'

'His little pocket Bible, thumbed at every page, speaks for itself,' replied May. 'But if we can get at its meaning so easily, why do good and great people differ about it so much? I suppose people will always think differently,' she added, shortly. 'For instance, in the Roman Catholic churches we are not allowed to link arms; in the synagogues people are told to put their hats on, and in an English cathedral to take them off.'

'Your argument is quite beside the point from which we started,' said Helen. 'We were talking about our duty and interest in the study of the Bible; and as to the duty, we have a direct command to search the Scriptures — the Christians at Berea were pronounced to be more noble than they of Thessalonica, from their habit of doing so daily. In the first Psalm there is a blessing promised to those who delight in the study of the law.'

May was not of an argumentative turn of mind, and she abruptly turned the conversation by saying, 'How dreadful it would be always to have a black cloud before ones eyes.' She spoke as if she were experiencing it; and Frances remarked that she had once seen black figures before *her* eyes, and that Miss Aberley had said it was because she was out of health.

'I do not think I am ill,' returned May; 'but I feel as if the Fates were holding me in their merciless grasp. It is a long time since I heard from Sir Lionel, and yet if a letter from him were to come I should be afraid to open it.'

'The Fates are not always represented as hags,' said Helen, smiling — 'sometimes as beneficent beings.' Here Madame opened the door and said 'she had hoped to find them all busy at work,' and so she put an end to the conversation.

May's manner was unusually subdued during the remainder of the day, but nothing particular happened until evening; then she said anxiously,

'That is the postman: he does not often come at this time!'

There was a letter for her, and it was in Dr. Coleridge's handwriting. She looked puzzled, then anxious, but opened it and read—her colour varying—her look eager. Then came a sharp, short cry of anguish, and she threw the letter into Helen's lap, and buried her face in her hands.

Helen read that Miss Bosanquet had died quite suddenly, as had always been expected would be the case, and that they did not know where to write to Sir Lionel.

'I must go home at once,' said May eagerly. 'Will you speak to Madame de Bernonville for me, and ask her to make arrangements?'

Feeling unable to find words of comfort, as one always does feel in any case of deep heart grief, Helen rose to do as she was requested, and as she stopped to kiss May on the way, the poor girl clung to her for a few moments in speechless agony, and then sought a spot where she could weep alone.

What a weight of care was being heaped upon her! How could she answer Dr. Coleridge's question and still keep to the spirit of her aunt's command? She felt sure that, for some good reason she could not understand, her aunt wished Sir Lionel's address to be kept secret. If Dr. Coleridge knew it, William Bryant would know it, and to ask Dr. Coleridge to keep it secret would be a sort of avowal that Sir Lionel was afraid of him. There was something humiliating in the thought, and her spirit was chafed by it. Uncertain what to do, she resolved to seek counsel of Helen, and when she came in search of her, she said emphatically,

'Helen, tell me one thing without asking me to explain. In case any one you loved, as I love Aunt Cam, had desired you *not to do a thing*, and circumstances happened which made it very difficult to obey, in fact, which seemed to render obedience impracticable, what would you do?'

Helen looked inquiring and thoughtful, then said,

'Unless it were impossible, I should keep strictly to the letter of the command.'

May felt that this advice did not meet her case, for that Sir

Lionel ought to be informed of what had happened, and it was with a feeling of relief that the thought struck her, that in his last letter Sir Lionel had said that his address in future would be uncertain, and that all she could do was to tell Dr. Coleridge that she was unable to furnish the required information. Rising and looking round her as if about to prepare for her journey, she asked Helen if Madame were making the necessary preparations, and on learning that she did not acquiesce in her proposal to return home, looked as if driven to despair. It seemed impossible to her to remain imprisoned at St. Jullien's while such great events were transacting at home; and when Madame came in to condole with and to converse with her on the subject of the proposed journey, saying that she was not at liberty to act in the matter without a command from Sir Lionel, that she could not for a moment entertain the thought of her travelling to England with only Alsie for an escort: she looked at first desperate, then resolute; then, as the fact of her impotency to act alone pressed itself upon her, despairing and hopeless. She was reluctantly obliged to submit until some one from home came to rescue her from her isolated and helpless position. The possibility never occurred to her that her aunt would be put away from her sight without her ever seeing her again. Helen followed Madame to the door, and remarked upon the sadness of the circumstances in which May was placed, upon which that lady agreed that it was sad, very sad indeed, but that such things had been going on since the time of Adam.

'Do not let her come in again,' pleaded May, who had overheard the remark; 'I can't bear to see those weary white gloves folded before me.'

Madame always wore white gloves when she had an interview with her pupils.

Here Frances made her appearance, and her sweet sympathizing face met with a warm reception.

'*She was so very good!*' she whispered, by way of comfort.

May kissed her, and asked if any one had told Alsie.

Helen said that she had told her, and that she was very much affected—that she was going to bring tea to them into her room.

May buried her face in the sofa-pillow. It seemed to her that she should never want tea any more; and when Alsie appeared with the tray, her eyes red with weeping, the sight of her caused her tears to flow more freely than they had yet done. After Alsie left the room, May went to the alcove in which her bed was placed, and lay down on it, she felt so very sad, as if she must screen herself from view. Helen felt that the kindest thing to do would be to allow her to weep unrestrainedly; and she and Frances sat quietly plying their occupations until she grew more calm; then Helen reminded her that she had a note to write, at the same time supplying her with writing materials.

Seating herself at the table, she did what was necessary, and begged that some one would at once come and take her to England, forgetting, in her grief, poor child! that there was no one at Scotswood who would feel authorized to send a messenger for her.

After she had closed the note, Helen advised her to lie down again for awhile. Her quiet unobtrusive sympathy was just such as was acceptable to May, and when she had followed her advice, Frances showed her tender thoughtfulness for her comfort by shading the light from her face, and performing such little services as were calculated to relieve without troubling her.

The next morning when May awoke to fresh consciousness of her grief, she found Frances sitting by her bed-side.

'We thought you might feel lonely when you awoke,' explained the little gentle voice; 'Helen said if I would be sure not to disturb you I might come and sit here.' And she nestled her head close to that of her friend, and kissed her; then, after listening sympathizingly to May's speculations as to when it was likely she would reach Scotswood, said, by way of an antidote to her sorrow, 'Dr. Milman called for a minute last night, and he was so very sorry for you; but he said something about it being well for us when we could believe that "all God's arrows are pointed with love."'

'What a pretty idea!' said May. 'I think I should like him.'

'Don't you know whose thought it was?' asked Frances. 'John Bunyan's!'

'The Bedfordshire tinker?' exclaimed May.

Frances assented, and remarked that he was such a good man, that all his ideas became elevated, and made him quite another being from his original self, and that no one would remember his handicraft while reading his thoughts, religion had so refined him.

CHAPTER XVII.

'Ah, quel plaisir d'être soldat,
Et gaiement on s'elans de l'amour ou combat,
Ah, quel plaisir, ah, quel plaisir d'être soldat!'

THE scene is a camp. A grey robe of rain-cloud envelopes it, and the general aspect of things is sad and sombre in the extreme.

Within one of the many weatherbeaten tents that stud the ground, sits Reginald Bosanquet, his nerves irritated by the monotonous flap! flap! of the sodden canvas, which has long ceased to be a protection from the weather; his countenance expressing in a painful degree the exhaustion and suffering to which he has been subjected. He is by no means deficient either in moral or physical courage, but, with both at command, he has not been able to cope successfully with the agglomerated miseries by which he is surrounded.

A severe attack of fever has prostrated him thus, and the heavy atmosphere, laden as it is with seething vapour of the impurest kind, is anything but stimulating in its effect on his weakened system.

'I 've got something for my trouble at last,' said a bright and cheery voice—a voice so pleasant as to suggest what was really the case—its belonging to our old friend Vero, who, improvising

a seat, began to display his acquisitions, among which was a letter for Captain Bosanquet.

'There is a rare lot of humbug going on,' he said, confidentially. 'At such a pinch as this the men should not be sent back under childish pretexts. I am the last to quarrel with system, so long as it subserves a right purpose, but with the men all but starving, such a state of things ought not to be.'

Reginald was engrossed with his letter, and did not reply; and Vero, seeing him look interested, said,

'I begin to wish *I* had secured some sweet spirit to sing my death dirge, in case I should become food for the crows.'

Reginald looked up, and made some remark as to his sister being a capital correspondent.

Vero expressed his astonishment at finding he had a sister, and said that he believed he had entertained some vague notion that, Melchizedek-like, he was without descent, at the same time confessing to a little curiosity as to the sender of those stylish epistles.

The fact of his sister's adoption had always been a sore point with Reginald, and he continued to peruse his letter, as if anxious to put a stop to the conversation.

Vero turned on his heel, and was about leaving the tent, fearing he had seemed inquisitive, when Reginald, detecting his motive, said, musingly,

'This ought to have come to hand long ago. I've no doubt there are others awaiting me somewhere. They seem to do anything to create trouble and delay. My correspondent says she has written regularly. My silence as to my sister has probably arisen from the fact of our having always been separated. *She* has lived in the south of England, and *I* in the north.

By-the-bye, I think Sir Lionel Shelley's estate is in your part of the country,' he added, inquiringly.

'I 've been as blind as a bat!' exclaimed Vero, interestedly. 'I could swear to the likeness anywhere. I've often puzzled myself as to whom you reminded me of. I have met your sister under the name of Shelley.'

This discovery led to a long and interesting conversation, and to revelations as to mutual friends; and they sat talking together until Vero's professional duties called him away.

The young men were excellent friends, and although their friendship was one of those we often see existing in contrasts, it was none the less substantial on that account. Vero's cloudless temper had been as sunshine to Reginald during his time of despondency and gloom, and Vero entertained so exalted an opinion of the high-mindedness and noble qualities of his grave friend, as to consider that in nursing him he was benefiting the world at large — that his premature disappearance from the stage of life would be an intrinsic loss to society generally.

Early the next morning Vero looked into Reginald's tent, and after an inquiry as to his health, and saying that he could see he was better, exclaimed, gleefully,

'It is the richest fun to watch those French fellows: they are such a plucky set! Their domestic talents are at a premium here. I believe they 'd concoct something palatable with material little less digestible than a razor-strop or an old pair of boots!' And, seeing a horse that had loosened its tether run by the tent, he was going to watch the sport, when Reginald inquired, wearily, if there were any news.

'I 've heard that fever patients are exacting,' was the joking reply, 'or yesterday's packet would have satisfied you. The

Pope has been rather unwell of a nervous complaint, but is better; the Ignis Fatuus arrived off Constantinople, but went down with all on board; and the intelligence gained from assumption is, that we shall be in Sebastopol before the end of the month. All of which information is about as reliable as that which generally reaches us.'

Reginald smiled, and, telling him not to let him keep him from anything he was going to do, endeavoured to put himself in a resting posture; but this was no easy matter — his aching limbs asserted themselves with provoking pertinacity, and his weariness gradually increased, until at last his mind gained a victory over his body, and enabled him entirely to suppress himself. Remembering the hundreds of brave fellows who were enduring the same kind of torture, with even less alleviation than fell to his share, and conscious that his presence among his men would have a cheering influence, he struggled to his feet, and, with an effort effected rather by moral than physical strength, sallied forth from his tent to stroll, or rather limp, about the encampment.

Many a face brightened at his appearance, as, with winning affability, he manifested an interest in their personal condition individually. He had just said, that although at the present time they seemed doomed to every kind of suffering incident to the fortunes of war, that he hoped soon to have some cheering news for them, and that they must keep up a brave heart upon principle, when a faltering of his voice and his extreme pallor convinced them that his experience had been no less painful than their own.

Sympathy from one identical with them in suffering was beneficial in its effect. The men felt that they would not be exceeded in endurance even by their fine-spirited officer; and

one of them was advising him only to think of taking care of himself, saying that they should do very well, when Vero came up to where he was standing.

'This is right down *felo de se*, my dear fellow!' he exclaimed, anxiously. 'Your strength will not admit of it. It is wasting power that should be reserved for a time of greater need. It's as bad as using those fine cavalry horses as beasts of burden.' And calling out to the men to keep their spirits up and their powder dry, and promising them that the cocked hats should not carry off all the honours next time, he led Reginald away, saying, as he felt him leaning heavily on his arm, 'You are all but fainting!'

Reginald explained that it was the sickly smells that had upset him—that he should be all right if he could lie down.

'The fact is, you want food,' said Vero. 'After fever, the appetite is not to be postponed with impunity.' And, for once at a loss how to act, and feeling it to be a sharp taste of real field service to see his friend sinking from inanition without power to afford relief, he covered him over with a cloak, and sallied from the tent in search of some nourishment palatable to an invalid.

After a great deal of ineffectual labour, he succeeded in collecting the necessary materials, and at once set to work to superintend the cooking of them; this done, he ordered his servant to carry the preparation to the tent.

'Just the thing we want,' he exclaimed, taking it from the man at the tent door, as if he had had no trouble whatever in procuring it. 'I dare say it is not as scientific as some of Soyer's productions, but not to be despised, nevertheless.'

And supplying Reginald with table necessaries, he had the pleasure of seeing him in the enjoyment of a savoury meal, and

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produced a bottle containing a beverage even more acceptable than food to an invalid.

'I am glad to be able to announce the arrival of fresh stores,' he said, cheerily, as he seated himself on a barrel, and proceeded to cut the tin foil from a champagne bottle. 'All you want now is feeding; starving is terrible work at such a pinch. From my experience of fever, I can imagine you to have been haunted with ghosts of "dead men," and grinning beer barrels; but I believe we have seen the nearest approach to a famine *we shall* see.' And he caused the gas in the bottle to shoot out the cork, with sufficient force to dispel things of a less misty nature than apparitions, even though they were of the substantial nature he had suggested.

He was well repaid for his trouble by observing the gusto with which the invalid drank off his draught, and was sauntering away from the tent in case he should be pressed to participate, when Reginald stopped him, by asking as to the result of the negotiations then being carried on.

'They are no go,' said Vero; 'we shall have to make them swallow a bolus or two yet. Don't be afraid of taking another draught,—I hear there is a large supply at hand. We shall no longer have to think of the good things floating about in Balaklava Harbour.' And he left his friend to his own meditations.

And Reginald's meditations were of a somewhat anxious character, fear and hope alternating as to whether operations would or would not be much longer delayed. In the summer he knew the climate to be particularly trying, with its long droughts and destructive thunder-storms; and his experience of the autumn caused him to dread a repetition of what had then to be endured. From March to May the climate is deli-

cious; and he hoped they would make the best of the coming season.

From this time his health began rapidly to improve, no less than the aspect of things generally. The drier weather enabled freer communication among the men, and topics of conversation increased as local occurrences were better known. The eye which had been so long obliged to rest on a fetid nauseous swamp was relieved by seeing it dried up, and the tents, once wet and dreary-looking, gleaming white amid the green of the surrounding country. Refreshing, though variable spring breezes, infused new vigour into thousands who had been prostrated and weakened by fever; and Reginald was among their number.

'I expect to see you at the head of a slashing onslaught yet,' said Vero, delivering himself of some fruit of a sort very highly esteemed in the Crimea. 'There is something to be done by some one before matters are brought to an issue. Our men are picking up wonderfully. They seem to be doing little or nothing in the Baltic.'

'They are content to *look* imposing and unapproachable,' returned Reginald; 'but if we want to settle the matter, a weasel will do more for us than the Royal Albert.'

'Trust them for not yielding, except under compulsion,' returned Vero. 'Are you inclined for a stroll?'

Reginald was very much inclined, and the two young men left the camp behind them, and with the delight of schoolboys, were soon traversing valleys bright with spring verdure. Trees of oak, elm, beech, linden, maple, and ash, although stunted in growth, reminded them of the land they had left, and of sweet English summers passed in pleasant fellowship with friends. The air was fragrant with the scent of thyme, and the earth strewed with the brighter blossoms of carnations,

saxafrages, pheasant's-eye, and lupins. Vero threw himself on the flower-studded grass, and regaled himself with its freshness and beauty; then taking out his pocket-book, he spread out some blossoms, and proceeded to place them between its leaves.

'I had strict injunctions to make a *hortus siccus* from the Crimean *flora*,' he said, explainingly. 'I am not at all sure that it was not your sister gave mine their taste for botany.'

From his knowledge of his sister, Reginald thought it very likely.

'Where have you met May?' he inquired.

'On two or three occasions, when she was staying with Lord Agramont's wards. Do you know the Douglases?'

Reginald seemed doubtful how to answer, but said indifferently that he believed he had seen them for a few minutes.

'If you have seen the eldest you are not likely to forget the fact,' returned Vero, warmly. 'I don't know that she would be called a beauty, but she's sure to make an impression. Do you remember Tennyson's Isabel? I fancy she will grow into a second Isabel.'

Reginald lifted his eyes to his friend's face: he might have wondered how deep an impression she had made upon *him*; and Vero continued, musingly,

'Agramont seems made for a family man! It is a mistake that there is not a lady at the head of affairs at the abbey. You know the report rife to account for his remaining a bachelor all these years?'

Reginald disowned any such knowledge, and Vero continued:

'It is very commonly supposed that he had a desperate fancy for a girl many years younger than himself; but, as she was a ward in Chancery and a minor, he could not get at her; and

some one, bolder than he, who would not be hindered by any such obstacles, ran off with her while he was thinking about it; and that he has never been able to transfer his affections.'

Reginald had heard such a story told of his own parents, and the identity of the circumstances struck him forcibly. His thoughts reverted to a visit Lord Agramont had paid to his mother before he left England; and connecting that with the unusual interest he had taken in his sister, the deduction forced itself upon him that his own mother might have been the girl who had so deeply impressed his heart. But he merely remarked that there were people who were not content unless they discovered a reason for all their neighbours' proceedings, and resolved again into thoughtfulness.

The effect of the walk had been invigorating, and they returned home feeling refreshed. As they neared their quarters, several shots passed very close to them, and suggested the probability that some sharp firing would shortly begin.

From habit such danger had become little more to them than ordinary excitement; they had learned to dodge large shot very much in the same way as, in years gone by, they had dodged each other at a game of rounders; and in spite of such a drawback to their composure, took re-possession of their tents in improved spirits.

That evening, by the light of a watch-fire, Reginald gathered his men for prayer. This practice had been interrupted during his illness, and those who heard him pour out his heart in thanksgiving for the improved state of things, rejoiced in the renewal of a communion which, for the time at least, set aside all difference of rank, and put captain and men on an equal footing. He felt he was beloved, and retired for slumber with a pleasant feeling of repose, even while listening to a thunder-

ing roar, caused by the Russians making a sortie on the batteries of the French troops.

He had just fallen into a quiet sleep, when a messenger knocked at his tent with orders from head quarters that he was to prepare for action, and, in a minute after, he was up and doing.

Bugles and drums were rousing the men, and soon troops were forming themselves, and all was in martial order. Reginald was energetic in his efforts to inspire his men with enthusiasm, buoying them up with the prospect of promotion; reminding them that he had felt proud of them as heroic sufferers, and that now he hoped to congratulate them as victorious soldiers. The eyes of many glowed with interest and affection, as they saw him foremost in danger wherever his presence could avail, and they felt that, while urging on them the necessity of doing their best, he was teaching them their duty by example. In the sharp of the conflict, when the booming roar of the cannon fell threateningly on the ear, prayers from some he had taught to pray were lifted up for his preservation. But had God heard? A ball just then knocked off the muzzle of a gun near where he stood, scattering the splinters on all sides so as to hide him from view. The Russians had got the range, and Reginald soon became undistinguishable in the *melée;* but a general officer, who was watching the proceedings, heard soon after, high above the roar of cannon, a sharp, boding cry from Vero.

CHAPTER XVIII.

'I have griefs enough;
Pray you be gentle, pray you let me be.'

'YOU *are* going with us to-day, May?' said Frances, as she and Helen were about to get ready for their visit to Dr. Milman's.

She looked prepared for disappointment, and May justified her expectations by replying that that evening had been fixed upon for her extra hour with M. de Brignola.

'Madame knew of the previous engagement,' returned Frances, looking blank.

'I do not suppose it is a matter of choice with her as to the time M. de Brignola gives his lessons,' replied May. 'When I met him in the hall this morning I begged off; but as he said that the arrangement had been made entirely with a view to my advancement, which *meant* to give me an opportunity of making up my deficiencies, if it were only in appreciation of his polite way of putting it, I could not make any further objection. If I had, I do not suppose it would have been of any use, for when he once takes anything into his head he is as inexorable as an Ottoman Mushir.'

She laughed as she spoke, but soon after fell into a serious reverie, the most salient impression in which was, the interest

expressed in M. de Brignola's manner towards her. For a moment she felt inclined to ask his aid in effecting her early return to Scotswood; but remembering that, for him to understand her difficulty, it would be necessary to make him a sharer in a family secret; pride and affection interposed as a preventive, and concluding that, if sorrow were necessary and inevitable, as he had said it was, such as hers was very hard to bear; she choked down tears that were now very apt to rise, and, turning to Frances, who was looking disappointed at the failure of her hope that she would enjoy the evening with them, added, by way of consolation,

'It is no use trying to resist M. de Brignola's absolutism.'

'Madame *ought* not to have arranged the lesson for to-day,' exclaimed Helen, with decision. 'I am not sure we should have accepted this invitation had we known that it would have been necessary to have left you alone.'

'Do not think of me,' returned May; 'and I am not sure it is fair to blame Madame de Bernonville for the arrangement: I dare say she is obliged to consult M. de Brignola's convenience. My conjecture that he is a gentleman or nobleman of fallen fortunes has been confirmed by *ex parte* evidence, for Miss de Febvre tells me that she used to meet him in Italy, where he was looked up to as one of the greatest men of the day; that people always thought it a victory achieved if they could secure him at their *soirées*; though, by-the-bye, that does not prove his fall in fortune. I dare say she knew of his being here through Dr. Coleridge having read some of my letters to darling Auntie,' she added, musingly.

'I was not aware that you corresponded with her,' returned Helen.

'She was so kind as to write me some particulars of Auntie's

death,' said May, colouring, as she thought of the unnatural reticence she had felt it necessary to practise of late.

Upon which Helen, who was not feeling in the most amiable of moods, remarked, shortly,

'Miss de Febvre always made a point of knowing everybody's news.'

'She used to make me think of a magpie,' said Frances, with quaint seriousness, 'running away with everything to her nest, then bringing out a bit at a time; and she had just a magpie's cunning odd ways.'

'She was very funny,' returned May, who had been won in spite of herself; for Miss de Febvre's kind thoughtfulness in writing to her had touched her; 'but you know she was educated in a French convent until she was fifteen, and I should think people shut up in that way get into a habit of only thinking about little every-day things; and after that she spent some years in Bologna, Florence, and Rome, always in convents. That is, perhaps, why she is not like other people.'

'Under any circumstances, we have no right to canvass her ungenerously,' said Helen, colouring, as she felt she might take a lesson from the usually thoughtless May. 'I should like to find an excuse for myself in the disappointment I feel at your not going with us to Dr. Milman's, but it would *only* be an excuse.'

Soon after this conversation, Helen and Frances started for the doctor's. They were quite at home there now, and entered his room sure of their welcome.

'One minute, my dear young ladies,' he said, as he gave a rapid glance down the list of killed and wounded in the 'Times' newspaper; then, turning to Helen, added, 'I hoped that we should have been saved further bloodshed. It is heart-breaking

to think of the hundreds of promising young fellows that are being cut off through the madness of one individual; but ambition, inordinate ambition, whether it refers to rulers of kingdoms or rulers of consciences, always leads to mischief.'

Helen took up the paper; she too seemed interested, for before looking up she read through the list to the end.

'I have arranged to receive a party of workpeople in my dining-room this evening,' continued the doctor, changing the conversation by explaining the object for which he had invited their presence; 'they are pleased to come, and seeing them here enables me to get a talk with them I could not get in any other way. Have I been too bold in asking you to help me to give them some tea?'

Helen expressed pleasure at the hope of being of use, and at once followed with Frances, Annie, and the doctor, to a room in which they found an animated party, looking as if in anticipation of a pleasant evening; among whom Helen observed Pierre Moreau, the man to whom the accident had happened from the passing of the carriage wheel over his foot. It was evident he felt out of place in being waited upon as a guest while there was anything to be done that he could make himself of use by doing; and without putting himself unduly forward, he acted as the doctor's right hand in so serviceable and sensible a way, as to leave him free to go about and chat with his guests.

The party of *ouvriers* there assembled were not of the lowest class; many of them were intelligent, and, to some extent, educated; and Dr. Milman's object in these meetings was to counteract the depressing and damaging effects of too long working hours, by encouraging them in a search after knowledge, and to press upon them that it was their duty to nourish

the soul as well as the body, and not to relapse into mere working machines. For the fulfilment of this purpose he had chanced upon a happy way of interesting them, by giving them elementary lectures on the sciences, into which he so cleverly interwove religious teaching as to remind those who listened to him of the fact that his chief concern was, as their spiritual guide, to lead them to consider such truths as came more immediately within his province.

This evening astronomy was the chosen subject, and some diagrams were to be used for illustration. Pierre offered himself as manager of the magic lantern, and the doctor detecting that it would be a satisfaction to him to feel he was of use, readily yielded to his proposition. The key-note of the lecture was selected from a passage in the book of Job—'Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion? Canst thou bring forth Mazzaroth in his season, or guide Arcturus with his suns?'—as suggestive of God's greatness, in contrast to the littleness and ignorance of man. Upon that he dilated eloquently, and then went on to remark on the tendency of ancient nations generally, and even of the heathen of our own time, to worship the host of heaven; bidding those present 'Seek Him who *made* the seven stars and Orion.' To this succeeded a clear, short statement and illustration of the different systems introduced since the days of Pythagoras, with some useful reflections on the difficulty of arriving at truth, and an invitation to join in praise to Him who, since He first placed the sun, moon, and stars in the heavens, for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and for years, had, by His fiat, maintained the whole planetary system in such admirable working order. The fact that the lecture had been useful was deducible from the chastened cheerfulness on the faces of the audience; and

when their kind host shook hands with each of them on leaving, a tone of grateful appreciation was audible in their thanks and 'good night.' Pierre, who had proved himself no less helpful with the magic lantern than at the tea-table, was gratified by the doctor's testimony as to the value of his services; and as he took leave with a happy look on his face, Helen wondered that one whose manner was so much that of a gentleman should have been in the circumstances in which she had first seen him. Feeling that the doctor must have exhausted himself with sympathy, and filled with admiration at the masterly way in which he had adapted his teaching to the capacity of his guests, Helen went to the tea-table with a feeling of responsibility that he should be well served; while Frances, who had been sitting in a state of quiescent, absorbed veneration, took in every word her dear friend said with delighted interest, and obtained from Annie the great privilege of giving him his slippers. The tea-meeting at the parsonage was always a time of enjoyment to the girls, as then they had the doctor all to themselves, and it was his habit to regale them with delightful talk; but this evening Helen, feeling that he would be glad to be quiet, reminded the younger girls that he must need rest and would like to be quiet. But, although reclining in his arm-chair with the perfect ease their manner was meant to induce, he at once engaged Helen in conversation, by remarking upon the surprise she was likely to have felt at seeing Moreau among his guests, explaining the circumstance by saying, that he had reason to believe that circumstances of a most trying and unforeseen kind had led the poor fellow to beggary. Helen looked inquiringly, and he continued,

'As soon as he left the hospital he came to me, and with a frank, sincere mode of address apologized for the trouble he

had occasioned me, at the same time assuring me that he had not been a vagabond from choice, but had been drawn into the circumstances in which I had found him by sheer misfortune. At my request he went fully into his antecedents, and during his recital I detected in him, not only a high sense of honour, but even some majesty of feeling. I have since spoken with him as to his religious opinions, and without sacrificing his sincerity by affecting an interest in religion, he expressed himself as in search of some end worthy the pursuit of a thinking being. I have been very well pleased with him.'

Helen asked interestedly as to his former career, and the doctor replying he could only give the man's account of himself, related the following particulars:

'The man's earliest recollection is of living with his father, who was engaged educationally, in a humble but respectable lodging in Paris. His mother was an Englishwoman, but he had never known her—she had died at his birth—and his father had been all-in-all to him, first nursing him, then making himself his playmate, and afterwards educating him. When he grew old enough, he (Pierre) used to keep house and prepare his lessons while his father was engaged in his duties as private tutor, looking forward to his home-coming as to the crowning pleasure of the day; but, unfortunately, Moreau *père* manifested a greater interest in politics, and spoke his sentiments more freely, than was desirable at that era of French history: the police got into a habit of dodging him, until at last they accused him of some offensive expressions against the government, and arrested him. Then he was arraigned, and finally denounced as an enemy to the government, and thrown into prison.

'Deprived of his usual means of support, Pierre's pecu-

niary resources soon failed, and, desolate and forlorn, he fell into a habit of loitering about the streets rather than be the sole occupant of his lonely room. Bitter and indignant at what his heart convinced him must be injustice to his good father, he did not hesitate to satirize a government that would not admit of discussion among its own people; and, in order to dispel his gloom, would seek out those who would listen to his opinions and his griefs. Upon some one calling his father a fool for interfering with what did not concern him, he knocked him down, and became so excited that he was imprisoned for misdemeanour. This, to use his own expression, "took all the pluck out of him," and after he was free he skulked about, afraid of being recognized by acquaintances of more prosperous days, longing yearningly for the time when he might talk over his wrongs with his father; but, to complete his misery, he found that he had been anticipating a pleasure that would never be his—that his father was dead—that bad air, bad food, and a troubled mind had induced low fever, under the effect of which his constitution had given way. In those revolutionary days there was no just tribunal to which to appeal, and the poor boy could do nothing but go about with a sore heart, chafing under the indignity to which he felt both he and his father had been unjustly subjected. He had not lost his taste for respectable habits, although fallen so low in calamity as to be thrown for companionship upon the scum of society, and he appealed boldly to some quondam friends of his father's to put him in the way of helping him to gain a respectable livelihood; but these regarded him very shyly, and intimating that to notice him would expose them to misconstruction and obloquy, they advised him by all means at once to leave the country.

'Seeing so many disheartening obstacles to success in his

native place, he gladly listened to the suggestion, and, after realizing what he could from the wreck of his father's small possessions, made his way to a shipping port, and embarked for South America. There he obtained employment on the coast, in "hide curing," and after realizing sufficient money for his purpose, he voyaged to Australia, took a turn at bush life and gold digging, stayed until he considered he had amassed a sufficiency of the precious metal to supply his future wants, and then started on his return voyage to Europe. But, alas! on landing he found he had been robbed of his luggage, none of which was ever recovered. He made a few speculations with some valuables he had on his person, and which had in consequence escaped the hands of his robbers, but the issue proving unsuccessful, involved him in entire ruin. A severe fit of illness ensued, during which he was indebted to the charity of strangers; and at the time of his attack upon your purse in the *Bois de Boulogne*, he was impelled by the cravings of hunger to beg for bread.'

Helen remarked that his life seemed to have been one series of misfortunes.

'And yet there is nothing tortuous in his statements,' returned the doctor, thoughtfully. 'I hope his plausibility has not warped my judgment, but all he says appears to me to be quite reconcilable, and he seems to have a deep sense of the shame of his position on the day he first made your acquaintance. The education of his early life, followed by his varied and unsettled avocations since, would naturally unfit him for home employment, but as he is evidently capable, and I believe reliable, I am hoping to be of use to him.'

'You are not going out again to-night, Grandpa?' said Annie, seeing him look at his watch.

'Only for one half-hour,' was the decided reply.

Helen marvelled at the toil the doctor underwent and the interest he took in those over whom he acted as shepherd, and decided that he was not one of the class whom the prophet Jeremiah denounced as scattering the Lord's people; and she ventured to ask him if it were not possible to work too hard.

'Undoubtedly; and love is beguiling in the service of such a Master,' returned the doctor. 'But I think I have a good deal of work in me yet. I do so want my people to have the Lord for their God. "To feel to want God is to possess God, and to possess God is to be happy," says a French writer; so that, if I can only teach them their need of God, I show them the way to happiness. I am going to have a number of my poor friends here, to distribute to them some clothes,' he added. 'May I ask your aid on the occasion?'

He must have detected a look on the girls' faces expressive of surprise that he should trouble himself with such things, for he said, laughingly,

'I 'm not so much at a loss as you ladies may suppose. Formerly, when I held a living in England, the old women on receiving their red cloaks used to say that the parson knew what he was about; so that I began to think I could buy cloth with the skill of a Leeds merchant. But here my richer friends furnish me with the supply I am speaking to you of distributing.'

Frances laughed merrily, and, in recognition of her merriment, he continued,

'What will Miss Frances say to what I am about to tell her, I wonder? I once had a woman in my parish who was to all appearance a confirmed idler, and as her husband was one of my especial favourites, and had once been caught by me taking advantage of his dinner-hour for the purpose of seeking com-

munion with his God, I determined, if possible, to help him by bringing about a better state of things in his home. Accordingly, upon being reminded of the cause for interference by seeing a group of unwashed, unkempt children, whom I found to be hers, enter the school-house, I set off to her cottage prepared for a bold onslaught. As usual, I found it difficult to cross its threshold for the heap of crockery and wet garments that impeded the way; but I was not to be frustrated in my plan, and after helping her to put her plates on the shelves, I told her I had come to help her with her work, for that I saw she had more to do than she could accomplish, and that I did not like to hear the mistress complain of her children being sent to school in rags. Meanwhile I was extricating my needle and thread from some recess, which I suppose struck her as unorthodox, for after plying excuses for her neglect by saying that there never were such children as hers for tearing their clothes, and that their clothes were past mending, she smiled faintly. I was for at once proceeding to business, and, seeing two ragged garments hanging on a line to dry, suggested that the two halves might make a whole. My faculty for planning made her laugh, and taking advantage of her toleration, I said, "*Try* what you can do, my good woman—*try*, and your children may be as neat as they are pretty." I had touched the right chord: tears came into the woman's eyes, and her husband afterwards thanked me for the revolution I had effected in his household.'

'How droll!—How gratifying!' were the relative expressions of the laughing girls, while they hugged the anecdote as another proof of their friend's excellence.

'Next time you come, I hope you will induce your friend to pay me a visit,' he added, as he took his leave of them. 'If

she be apprehensive lest she should find the old doctor too grave—for she has a merry face of her own—tell her she will find me up to all sorts of fun: ready to tie her to the table with a bit of thread, or to turn these leaves' (pointing to a plant on the table) 'into sugar-plums, if only she will supply me with a wand.' And then detecting, perhaps, what was in fact the case, that his attempts at amusing young people were overstrained and exaggerated, he added more seriously, 'I should like to see her here.'

Soon afterwards the carriage came to convey them home, and Helen, noticing a vexed expression on Sylvie's face, inquired the cause.

'I am not at all satisfied about Alsie, Miss,' was the woman's sharp reply. 'She goes out of evenings no one knows where, but my belief is it is to some of them disreputable dancing places. Her young mistress gave her leave to go and hear Mass at one of the churches this afternoon—that was at four o'clock, and she has not made her appearance since, and now it is past nine. She isn't half the girl she was.'

Helen looked concerned, and, after putting some questions to Sylvie, determined upon inquiring into the matter; but they found May very much preoccupied until Frances grew eloquent on the subject of the lecture, when she became interested and ready to listen to what they had to say. There was no break in the conversation until Alsie came in with her mistress's light, and asked if she were ready for her. Helen observed a demure downcast look about the girl she did not like—a meekness and assiduity to please unnatural to her—and, before parting for the night, she invited May to her room and put her in possession of the report she had heard of her.

At first May retorted impatiently, as if inclined to ignore the

obligation to look after her; but Helen brought her to book by saying,

'As Sylvie says, Paris is not a fit place for a girl like Alsie to be out alone. You would be very angry with yourself if she got into mischief for want of proper *surveillance*.'

'I thought Alsie was to take care of *me*,' returned May. 'Do not prognosticate more evil, I have had too much of the tragic lately.'

'But I think it would be as well to make use of the warning we have had,' returned Helen, suggestively, feeling that some apology was necessary for interfering.

'I only gave her leave to go to church,' said May. 'One is not supposed to get any harm there.'

'She cannot have been at church all this time,' said Helen. 'It is evident she does not think it necessary to return at the end of the service; and even if she did, ought you to allow an ignorant girl like Alsie to get into the habit of connecting all that theatrical display with religion? Such a mixture of the solemn and the ludicrous is likely to do away with all reverential feeling.'

'How bigoted you are, Helen! It is my belief that we make a great fuss about little differences. There is a great deal more meaning in those ceremonies than you imagine. How could such a man as M. de Brignola be a Roman Catholic, if all its ceremonies were so absurd as you think them?'

'I cannot answer you,' said Helen, 'but I can ask you how any one can be a Roman Catholic, and yet accept the second commandment?'

At that minute May thought of a ludicrous figure she had seen, of a Virgin reclining upon a check mattress, — with a Joseph by her side, that some devout soul had purchased, thinking it a pity that she should be alone, and said, laughingly,

'Perhaps the images may be the least resistible point, but those are only to fix people's attention. You do not suppose that educated people worship those tawdry, bedizened things? Of course people of bad taste, with empty purses, have to be content with common pictures, just as the people in England have to be content with whitewashed meeting-houses, when they cannot afford to build churches. You do not object to that lovely picture of the Madonna you are copying?'

'I should object to worship it,' replied Helen. 'You are wilfully illogical, May. You must see that in one case there is a great doctrine involved, while in the other it is only a matter of funds, and that if the educated Romanists do not give credence to a doctrine so widely propagated by them, the only conclusion to be arrived at is, that they systematically cheat and impose upon the credulous.'

May expressed an opinion that what might excite devotion in the ignorant, might fail to have the same effect on people of more refined taste; and laughingly remarked, that Helen would make a capital Lord Chancellor—that she always felt as if on oath in her presence.

'It is only a deliberative inquiry,' returned Helen, smiling, 'but one important enough to demand consideration; and I want you to confess, that to allow Alsie to frequent Roman Catholic churches, is subjecting her to a wrong influence; and that, on principle, you ought to forbid her staying out late at night.'

'She likes a little change, and I do not like to interfere,' said May, evidently not laying much stress on her obligation. 'After bringing her so far from home, it would seem unkind to restrict her too much.'

'But it would in fact be the kindest course,' persisted Helen.

'Sylvie tells me that she goes out looking just like the girls who sing at the open-air concerts, and that she believes her head is quite turned with admiration.'

'Well! we certainly can't return to France M. de Brignola's compliment to England, that there "*La beauté cours les rues*,"' said May, 'so that I dare say she is thought pretty; but I can't help it.'

Helen felt that May's opinions, if opinions they could be called, were becoming contrary to that which she felt to be the truth, and she lay awake thinking over them a long while before she fell asleep. She knew M. de Brignola's teaching to be chiefly conversational, and that he had every opportunity of conveying his sentiments to his pupils on religious as well as any other subjects, and May had evidently pinned her opinions to his sleeve. She turned, trying to settle herself to sleep, when Frances, detecting the movement, said,

'Are you asleep, Helen? I can't lie still. I am so sorry if I am keeping you awake.'

Helen reassured her, but poor Frances had a restless night, and the next day was slightly feverish; she did not take any breakfast, and her case was laid before Madame.

Madame was of opinion that her "*petite biche blanche*" had only "*la maladie du pays*," — that she had been infected by "*pauvre petite*" Shelley; but Sylvie, being of another opinion, took the matter into her own hands, without effect, however, for her patient was worse the next day, and Helen became so anxious, that when May went for her drive, she asked her to leave a note for her at Dr. Milman's: he knew something of medicine, and would give his opinion as to what she ought to do.

May fulfilled her mission in a way that fascinated the doctor

as she managed to fascinate everybody, and he would have liked to have detained her; but on learning that her visit was not by permission, he promised to do as he was requested, and bade her adieu.

Had not May decided it was very unlikely, she would have said she saw William Bryant turn round a corner as she passed the *Elysées!*

CHAPTER XIX.

'A lore benignant he hath lived and taught,
To draw mankind to heaven by gentleness,
And good example is his business.'

FRANCES is lying on a couch, her cheeks glowing brilliant carnation, an unmistakable evidence of the fever burning within. Her room looks very pretty, furnished, as is usual in France, half bed-room, half drawing-room fashion; and Helen seated by a table strewed with materials for different occupations, her face a happy blending of sweetness and seriousness, is undoubtedly one of its greatest attractions.

'This is quite a subversion of rules, for Miss Frances to make an old man dance attendance on her,' said the doctor's kind voice, as the door of the room was thrown open by Sylvie, and he walked towards the invalid.

'Frances seems so very poorly, that I shall be glad of your opinion as to whether I shall call in medical aid,' said Helen, feeling some apology to be necessary for troubling him.

Taking the young girl's burning hand in his, he replied that the fever must undoubtedly be got rid of, and that he did not think she could do better than send for his own physician. He then reached a scrap of paper to write down an address, and, giving it to Sylvie, desired that Dr. Andrews should be sum-

moned immediately, in order that he might have an interview with him before he left.

The promptness of the measures considered necessary excited Helen's alarm: she felt how closely Frances had wound herself round her heart, and a dread foreboding oppressed her; but happily she now had a sanctuary to which to retreat, where she could commune, not with an unknown God, but a personal Friend—one to whom she could look up with settled trust that He would direct all things well concerning her.

It was not long before Dr. Andrews arrived, when he pronounced his patient to be suffering from fever of an aggravated description, and recommended the immediate application of leeches.

'I like those little black fellows,' interposed Dr. Milman, seeing Frances look troubled, as if she were unprepared for so unpleasant a remedy. 'If they do their duty, that is, *bite well*, they will soon put this fever to the rout. It is not going to have it all its own way.'

Frances smiled faintly, and Helen inquired if the illness was likely to be a long one.

'Much depends upon skilful nursing: we must guard especially against unnecessary waste of strength,' was the doctor's reply. 'We cannot tell what turn this kind of fever may take. I do not consider it infectious at present.'

'Do you think it necessary to trouble Lord Agramont?' asked Helen, in an aside to Dr. Milman.

'I should expect it if I had been to you as a father for so many years,' was the decided reply.

There was something in his tone that brought back old times to her mind, when, from distrust of Lord Agramont's capability of sympathy, she had cut herself off from the possibility of re-

ceiving it; but Sylvie entering with the leeches, called off her attention from herself.

Frances had been lying as if the fact of Dr. Milman's presence gave her a feeling of rest and security, now and then whispering some soft appreciation of his kindness; and when the little reptiles were about to be applied, there was something in her look that induced him to volunteer his aid.

That they should act under the doctor's control did much to reconcile her to their attacks; and her confidence in his skill proved to be well founded, for no nurse in the three kingdoms could have directed operations more skilfully.

After he had left, and Frances was resting, Helen took out her desk to write to Lord Agramont. A silent monitor whispered caution, but, by some perversity of reasoning, she felt that she ought not to trouble him with small details—that she could not expect him to feel the excess of interest that would alone satisfy her where Frances was concerned; the result of which reflection was, a mere matter-of-fact statement of Frances' illness, and a very unnecessary confession that she had written at Dr. Milman's suggestion.

'I 'm obliged to creep in sideways, as the wood wren creeps into its nest,' said May, opening a door that led from a closet occupied by Sylvie to her friends' room; 'if Madame de Bernonville sees me in the corridor, she screams out to me to keep away.'

'Then I must not let you stay,' said Helen, decidedly. 'Respect must be paid to her wish in the matter, although Dr. Andrews is of opinion that we need not fear infection at present.'

'Then be reasonable, and let me just do something for her,' said May, persistently.

And after stooping to kiss Frances, she looped up the pretty

muslin curtains that shaded the alcove in which her bed stood, and producing one of her own choice toilet bottles, and a jewelled fan that had once belonged to Mrs. Shelley, placed them on a little table by the bed; and then, yielding to Helen's entreaty, left the room, but only to return a minute after with a vase of flowers.

Everything she did was done in such a happy, easy way, as if she knew she were loved and appreciated. Her presence was very acceptable to Frances, who was just saying she hoped she would be allowed to come in and see her sometimes, when Madame, no longer dreading infection, graciously made her appearance.

May, by no means abashed at being caught disregarding rules, called her attention to the effect of the room generally, and Madame pronounced it to be *la plus virginal qu' on puissant voir*, and then reminded her that M. de Brignola would be waiting for her.

May was always prepared for him, and went down stairs satisfied that he would not find fault with her want of preparation; but, contrary to his custom, he did not call for the lesson she had been studying, but, instead, kept her engaged in conversation on various subjects, interesting and instructing her in a way he knew well how to do. As part of the entertainment he took her an imaginary tour through France and Italy, and as he pointed out the different places on the map, astonished her by saying, '*We* will ascend that mountain,' or '*We* will sail down that lake,' or '*We* will miss that town and stop there,' until she was lulled into a dream that she was about to travel with M. de Brignola for her escort; but on awaking to the reality, she felt that his plans 'lacked form a little,' and blushed slightly—she didn't know why. Perhaps he observed it, for he said, quickly,

'We start in a few days, and go over the ground I have pointed out. I should like to introduce you to my sister before we go. I know you can appreciate beauty, and hers is beauty worthy even the land of the Madonna. A holy life has set its softening stamp on a face which was before almost perfection.'

May did delight in beauty, and looked interested; whereupon he regaled her with a graphic description of the home of his childhood, in which that sweet sister used to be his self-denying little companion—of a lovely terraced garden, surrounded by vineyards and orange groves, the whole illumined by a rosy sunset glow, in which she inspired poets and painters by the magic of her charms, and yet maintained a simplicity of character that was still her greatest attraction.

May's colour rose as his enthusiasm communicated itself to her, and he added,

'And she is choosing rather to become a bride of the Church than to ally herself with the great and noble of the earth. I am going to take her to Rome, where I shall witness her devotion.'

May hoped she should see her, inquired as to the ceremony of taking the veil, and asked an explanation of many of the usages in the Romish Church, the result of which will be revealed on a future occasion. Her inquiries and the replies to them occupied the full time generally given to her lesson, and when M. de Brignola left her, saying, in his suave gentlemanly way, that, although the lesson had been novel and fragmentary, he hoped it had not been unprofitable, she was quite unsuspicious that his language had been purposely vague, while she wondered that he should so forget himself as to talk as if she were likely to be his companion on his journey to Rome. She was about to leave the room to talk over what had happened with Helen, when he re-entered and handed her a letter, saying,

'I like to be the bearer of what will give pleasure. I hope my friend Sir Lionel is well?'

He lingered as if waiting for information; but, seeing May keep the epistle in her hand unopened, far too polite to intrude his inquiry, he raised his hat, and again wished her 'Good morning.'

No one beside May ever saw more than the outside of Sir Lionel's letters. They always struck her as being weak, not to say maudlin, in expression, and this had been quite sufficient to prevent her making them public; but now they hinted at a bewildering, perplexing mystery, that afforded a *reason* why their perusal should be confined to herself. This one was dated from a town in the south of Italy, and was full of running invectives against William Bryant, and hints that Sir Lionel's isolation and banishment from Scotswood were caused by him. It urged her to keep every one in ignorance of his address, and, as if the better to secure himself, said he was about to change his residence. Then followed extravagant expressions of love to herself, and assurances that all he had belonged to her, with directions that she should call at a certain jeweller's shop in Paris, where he had sent his diamonds to be re-set for her according as she should decide; winding up by reminding her that when she was tired of school she could join him, which reminder was very fretting and vexatious, as he never gave her any idea as to how the journey was to be accomplished.

Altogether, Sir Lionel's letters afforded her little pleasure: she was far too sensible to be satisfied with anything so weak as his expressions, or so undecided as his plans; and a few minutes after M. de Brignola had left her, Helen found her sitting in vexed abstraction, thinking over the embarrassments of her position. Since Miss Bosanquet's death, it had not been

unusual to find her thus; and ascribing her depression to the sorrow that event had occasioned, Helen asked no questions, but showed her a paper sent by Dr. Milman, in which mention was made of the safe arrival of Reginald and Vero in the Crimea, and then went on to talk of Frances and Alsie, and topics of mutual interest.

Thoughts of her brother and of days gone by, when she had been free from any perplexing and overwhelming causes of grief, were thus brought vividly to May's mind, and she feelingly exclaimed, as her eyes filled with tears,

'Helen, girls ought not to be separated from their own parents—their own home! You don't know how I feel to want mamma or Reginald, or some one belonging to me.'

She spoke so earnestly that Helen could have wept for sympathy; but, kissing her affectionately, she said,

'I do not know what we should do without you just now—Frances so looks forward to a sight of you.'

'I am going to get her some flowers: there has been a show at the Tuileries, and I shall have a choice,' replied May, brightening. 'Madame has invited me to take a drive with her to see some wonderful bonnets, of the arrival of which she has been apprised; but I am to be allowed to fetch the flowers first, and Alsie is going with me.'

'It is very kind of you to take so much thought for Fan,' said Helen, sweetly. 'I hope you will come back feeling better.'

Upon which May kissed her, and went to prepare for her drive. May felt that Helen's friendship was the richest blessing she had. She loved and trusted her so entirely, that it would have been a great relief to her to have put her in possession of the exact circumstances, the solution of which was so inex-

plicable to her; and while she doubted her liberty to do so, another doubt crossed her mind, whether such a friendship as existed between Helen and herself did not demand entire confidence. She could not enter into the crooked policy of the maxim which recommends behaving towards a friend with the guarded caution you would do to an enemy. Darkness and concealment were contrary to her nature: her impulse was to disclose herself frankly; but her principle was never to reveal a secret that had been intrusted to her, so that this presented another difficulty in her experience.

She had ordered the flowers to be put into the carriage, and was about to return to it herself when she saw William Bryant talking to Alsie. The sight of a face from home, even though it belonged to one for whom she entertained a well-founded and mature aversion, caused a thrill of excitement, something akin to pleasure; and the feeling betrayed itself. Detecting his advantage, Bryant smilingly accosted her, and, affecting a brotherly interest, informed her that he had been induced to make a journey to Paris solely on her account, supposing that she would be feeling anxious for particulars of her aunt's death.

Sweet as would have been some message of adieu or blessing from her aunt, a religious feeling of obedience to her command kept all others in check, and, merely vouchsafing a bow of thanks for his quixotic self-sacrifice, she mounted she carriage and told the coachman to drive home.

Had she not been too much absorbed in her own thoughts to note what was passing around her, she might have observed a foolish look on Alsie's face, and one of bitter resentment on that of the young man, as he muttered something about her not being able to afford to be so independent; but both were lost upon her, and on reaching St. Jullien's she merely gave

orders that if any one called to see her he was not to be admitted, as she did not intend to see him, and then went on as usual with the business of the day.

The next day was Sunday; but for several small reasons combining, she did not go to church; the first being that she had wasted a great deal of time in searching for Sir Lionel's last letter, which she had most unaccountably mislaid; the next that she had not her friends to go with her; another that she feared to meet William Bryant; and lastly that the interest she felt in the service was not sufficient to counterbalance so many drawbacks; so after announcing her intention of staying at home, she furnished herself with a book, and had the intention of reading it, but her thoughts soon became absorbed in the composition of some lines descriptive of her own isolated position. She had made but little progress, when a servant came in with a note, and learning that it was for Helen, she made the delivery of it an occasion for a visit to the sick-room.

It was from Dr. Milman, who, with his usual thoughtful kindness, had endeavoured to supply the want he knew Helen would feel in the absence of public worship, by suggesting to her a subject for religious recollection. Frances, made happy by this kindly remembrance, handled the communication with manifest satisfaction, and on seeing the nature of it, proposed that May should stay, and that Helen and she would talk it over together, so that she might hear them.

There was no appeal from this request, and May settled herself to spend part of the morning in her friend's room. The subject Dr. Milman had selected for them was 'The terms of appropriation Christ uses towards His people;' and he had prefaced his remarks by a prayer that the study of the Word might be useful to them—that its pages might be illumined by

a ray from heaven—that the comfort it offered for their acceptance might be gratefully received by them, and that the prayer and praise they would offer should be real heart-worship. As May named the references, and Helen read one soothing text after another, with the doctor's notes explaining their full meaning, God's protecting love seemed more real to them than it had ever before done, and a happy smile, which now and then lighted up Fan's now usually listless expression of face, proved that the doctor's attempt to give comfort to his little friend had been effective. When this exercise had been brought to a close, Helen, fearing the effect of greater excitement for her sister, recommended her to try to sleep a little, and left the room, followed by May, who said, as she passed through the study,

'I am so teased at having mislaid a letter. It is one I should be particularly vexed to lose, and I cannot find it anywhere. The recollection of my loss tyrannized over me when I wanted to listen to what your dear doctor had to say.'

'Have you used it for a book-marker?' suggested Helen, walking about the room and assisting in the search.

Every possible hiding-place was looked into, but without the desired result, and May, feeling that she ought not to trouble her friend further on a subject that must seem of so little importance to any one but herself, said that they would leave Alsie to find it, adding that she was never forthcoming when she was wanted.

Helen was about to leave her, but May stopped her by saying,

'I asked M. de Brignola an explanation of the forms and ceremonies to which you so much object in the Romish Church, and I think I have a full answer.'

Always ready for a discussion, and especially on a subject

which had lately possessed for her a special interest, Helen linked her arm in that of her friend, and proposed a walk up and down the avenue.

'I knew he would furnish me with good authority,' said May, satisfied with the information she was about to communicate. 'The fact is, Protestants speak in ignorance of the precedents Catholics have for their various observances. For instance, I asked, just to satisfy you, why there was all that change of drapery and elaborate dressing among the priests.'

'Why?' asked Helen, looking interested.

'He immediately reminded me of the magnificent dresses described in the twenty-eighth of Exodus,' returned May. 'The High Priests had seventy-two bells of gold, and as many pomegranates of different colours round their skirts,' she added, triumphantly. 'They always had different vestments for different occasions.'

Helen smiled and listened.

'And in answer to my question, why pious Roman Catholics wore horse-hair shirts, and a point of a cross pricking them, he said that that too had its counterpart in the Jewish Church; for the Jews sat in sackcloth and ashes, and put thorns in the fringes of their garments, that the pricking might remind them of God's commandments. And the Jews were God's *own* people, you know. And then as to fasting, they fasted on Mondays and Thursdays—'

'Because Moses went up to Mount Sinai on Thursday, and came down on Monday,' said Helen, helping her out.

'I have heard you laugh at the acolytes running about with candles, and all the *paraphernalia* they use in the service,' returned May. 'But in the most ancient of all Churches, in which the ordering of the Temple was laid down by God Him-

self, some of the Levites carried the coverings of the Tabernacle, and others the interior fittings; and although, after they were settled, David changed their office, it was very much the same. And you do not like the fuss that is made about the high dignitaries of the Church; but the Rabbis sat in reserved chairs—'

'It does strike me as rather ridiculous to carry about the Pope in a sedan chair, as if he were decrepit,' interposed Helen, satirically; 'to take his handkerchief out of his pocket, and put it in again, as if he had not the use of his limbs.'

'And as to the objection to calling priests "father,"' continued May, 'the scholars of the prophets were called in the Kings *Filii prophetarum.* And nunneries are as old, as old! We read of the vestal virgins remaining in their nunneries for thirty years; ten years learning the mysteries of their profession, ten years exercising them, and ten teaching them to others; and yet we have looked upon these customs as belonging exclusively to the Roman Church.'

'Or to Jews and Pagans,' suggested Helen, gravely. 'You are well up in the customs of both. May I ask to which you profess to belong?'

May's enthusiasm was a little quelled; she coloured, and answered,

'Confessed that I am neither Jew or heathen, I do say that with such authority, the ceremonies of the Catholic Church do not appear so absurd as we are apt to think them. We laugh at the practice of eating fish on a Friday, and of dressing up the altars for various feast days; but what could be more trifling to our way of thinking than to take a candle, and to peer into mouse-holes, in case there should be a bit of leaven in the house at the time of the Passover?'

'But does this refer to the Church of the present day?' asked Helen, encouraging her to talk.

'We adopt *some* of their customs,' returned May. 'When we confer orders, there is the laying on of hands, from the custom of imposing hands on the Levites, mentioned in the eighth of Numbers. And even the canonical hours of prayer in the Church of Rome correspond to the greater hours of the day and night among the Jews; and as to telling beads, and saying prayers on the steps of the cross, how like to saying the Psalms on the stairs that separated the women's court from the men's in the Jewish Temple! Do you know that it is from that practice they call the Psalms following the hundred and nineteenth, "songs of degrees"?'

'Protestants, or say rather Bible students, find quite another order of things introduced by our Lord in the New Testament,' returned Helen. 'Form was to be superseded by *spirit* worship. When Christ and His apostles addressed multitudes, we do not hear of any High Priest's dress being necessary. And perhaps you forget that the Rabbis grew so ambitious for the name of father, as to call forth an injunction from our Saviour, "Call no man father on earth;' and that when the Pharisees marvelled that Christ ate with sinners, and did not make it a religious observance to wash before meat, He compared the practice to making clean the outside of the cup and platter, and told them rather to give alms of such things as they had. And as to fasts, you know that our Lord compared those who made their faces sad with fasting, to hypocrites; and the Pharisees were rebuked by Him for loving the chief places in the synagogue; but I think we must go to St. Paul's Epistle to prove that some of the practices to which you allude were reproved by our Lord and His followers. When writing to Timothy, he calls *forbidding*

to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, a doctrine of devils; and then such texts as those to the Colossians, '*Let no man therefore judge you in meat and drink*,' &c.; '*Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels;*'—'*Why are ye subject to ordinances?*'—'*Touch not, taste not, handle not*,' have all reference to forms and ceremonies in use among different Jewish sects, and are condemned as having only *a show of wisdom in will worship and humility.* He speaks of such practices as derived from tradition from their forefathers, and not sanctioned in the Church of Christ. Do we quite understand the premises on which we are arguing? I think you began by wishing to justify the practices of the Roman Church, by proving that their ceremonies were similar to those in use in the Jewish Church, and I have tried to show such practices are not the more justifiable on the score of their resemblance to a state of things, the utility of which no longer exists.'

'If my argument is not logical, it puts the ceremonies of the Romish Church in a more dignified light,' said May. 'I was surprised at the similarity between the institutions in the Jewish and Roman Churches. M. de Brignola mentioned a sect of Pharisees who used to shut their eyes to avoid the sight of a woman, just as the Jesuits do now.'

'*I* have read of another sect who wore a hat like a mortar, so that they could not look upward or on either side, only downward and forward,' laughed Helen. 'I wonder which way the monk of La Trappe looked, who did not know of a wall building in his abbey grounds until he knocked his head against it, to the great peril of his skull?'

May laughed, but felt defeated, and said she was not holding up Pharisaic customs as worthy of imitation.

'You have proved your point,' said Helen, mischievously, 'that Roman Catholic customs are not as original as they are supposed by some to be. It was a very curious concurrence of circumstances, that at the time Herod's Temple was set on fire by Titus, the temple of Delphi (the chief in request among the heathens) was utterly overthrown by an earthquake, and that neither of them could afterwards be repaired. It seems as if God then intended to put an end both to Jewish ceremonies and heathenish idolatry, and that the kingdom of Christ should be established.'

'I wanted to prove that there is a better foundation for the practices than people generally suppose,' returned May, not willing to give up her point.

'But not a reason for observing them, said Helen. 'It seems that M. de Brignola has given you no answer at all, belonging, as he professedly does, to a *Christian* Church. He is not the only one who has compared Roman Catholics to Pharisees. Jerome compared the women who carried about pieces of wood reported to be from the true cross, and who wore short sentences of the Gospel as charms, to Pharisees; but that was not holding them up for our imitation. M. de Brignola is generally successful in argument; but if he furnished you with the information of which you have given me the benefit, in justification of the idolatrous practices common in the Church of Rome, he has in this instance signally failed.'

Here Sylvie came to tell Helen that the doctor was with Frances, and May was left to herself, to meditate on what M. de Brignola had said to her. The joining Sir Lionel did not seem so hopelessly impossible as it had before appeared, and she indulged the thought that her lucky star, under which people used to say she was born, and which had since turned

into a comet, might return from its expedition and help her out of her difficulty; that Sir Lionel might write again, and tell her to join him at once; and that it might just happen at the time that M. de Brignola was going to Italy with his sister. What a pleasant association of circumstances that would be! Sir Lionel would like her to travel under the escort of one for whom he entertained so high an opinion. She would have the pleasure of that sister's company of whom M. de Brignola spoke in such enthusiastic terms, and the benefit of his local knowledge at the places where they rested, with the prospect of meeting Sir Lionel at the end of the journey. The dream, pleasant though it was, and not seeming entirely foundationless, lost in firmness as she thought of laying it before Helen, for some instinct told her that she would not approve of the plan; but the thought, nevertheless, so far haunted her as to interfere with her usual night's sleep. When she rang her bell the next morning, it was answered by Sylvie, and, looking up at the unexpected face, she said,

'Will you send Alsie to me? Have you come to tell me anything about Frances?'

'I don't see much change in Miss Frances,' returned the woman, curtly. 'I suppose, from what the doctor says, we can't look for much at present, poor lamb! And as to sending the young woman, that's more than I can do. She took herself off somewhere last night, and has not thought proper to show herself since. Most likely she was off to that "Shoto de Flor"' (*Château des Fleurs*), 'or some such unreputable place. When young women give themselves up to that sort of thing, particular if they have a bit of natural colour in their faces, there's no knowing what won't be the end of it!'

May, colouring, and impatient at Sylvie's long maundering

speech, asked, concernedly, if she meant that Alsie had been out all night.

'What should I say it for else?' asked the woman, in a way May thought impertinent. 'It's just what I predetermined. She goes from here dressed in the highest of style: no one could suppose she was after any good.'

May was about to joke Sylvie on her want of charity in predetermining anything so manifestly to the poor girl's detriment, but humbled, as she remembered her disregard of warnings, said, conciliatingly,

'What must be done, Sylvie?'

'I know what mustn't be done,' was the ungracious reply. 'Miss Frances must not be told of it. She, poor lamb, sees things with her eyes open, bless her! I'd just send in a note to Miss Douglas, and ask her advice: she has a clear head as well as a good heart.'

May felt a little piqued at words which insinuated that, if *Helen* had a clear head and a good heart, *she* had neither the one nor the other; but, remembering she had disregarded a warning, the value of which was now made painfully manifest, she at once acted on Sylvie's suggestion.

Helen felt helpless in the matter. Her thoughts were preoccupied with Frances, who now lay almost in a state of stupor, but she advised that Dr. Milman should be consulted, and told Sylvie to accompany May to his house, and put him in possession of all the circumstances.

Sylvie suggested that the man with a lame foot was as likely as any one she could think of to put them on the right track, for that he seemed to be a good deal taken up with the young woman himself.

May made use of this hint, by communicating it to the

doctor, and, before leaving, told him further, that as Sylvie could not be spared from Frances, and he might not recognize Alsie, it would be necessary she should help in the search. So it was settled that May and the doctor should go in quest of Alsie.

CHAPTER XX.

'T is not enough to help the feeble up,
But to support him after.'

'You trench upon my patience.'

THE doctor had no difficulty in finding Pierre Moreau's place of abode. It was near the *Faubourg St. Antoine*, and thither he went, accompanied by May, who, once awakened to a sense of Alsie's danger, was ready for any amount of self-surrender to effect her deliverance.

Dr. Milman knew the man of whom they were in search to be in very necessitous circumstances; that he had no resource for present subsistence other than any accidental work he might pick up; but, from his respectable appearance, he was not prepared for the squalor and filth they had to encounter in search of him.

The house to which they were directed appeared to be a *restaurant* of the lowest description, respecting which it was difficult to determine whether it was only half finished or in a state of patching up, as the woodwork was its original colour, and some of the window-frames were still unglazed. It had a wretched, deserted, shabby appearance; and, except for a canvas suspended over the doorway, announcing in flaming characters that amusements of different descriptions were going

on within, one would have doubted whether it were not uninhabited. May was puzzled to know how people were to reach the amusements so conspicuously advertised; for, besides the further approach to the house being impeded by slush and garbage of most unsavoury kinds, the steps leading up to the door were so broken as hardly to admit a footing.

The doctor looked at her commiseratingly as she placed her dainty feet first on one piece of cabbage stalk and then on another; but she, detecting his distress on her account, laughed merrily, saying that she had seen places almost as dirty before, when she had been to view the manufactures in the different towns through which she had passed.

The doctor had to keep a ragged cur at bay with his umbrella; and after knocking at the door—for, contrary to custom, it was fastened—he impatiently awaited its opening. There was not footing for two on the broken steps at the same time, and May stood balancing herself, with considerable skill, to prevent getting over her ankles in mire.

A scared-looking man, half dressed and apparently half fed, but entirely civil, appeared in answer to their summons; and upon their inquiring if Pierre Moreau lived there, his answer was, '*Il retournera toute suite.*' Throwing open a door, he invited them to enter by saying, '*Il n'y à personne là.*' With a deferential bow and a glance of admiring inquiry at M. Pierre's distinguished visitors, he left them, safely closing the door after him.

May did not like the feeling of being shut in, and proposed that they should open the window; but the blessing of free air seemed to have been purposely excluded, the windows not appearing to have been constructed with a view to its admission. Her olfactory nerves were sorely tried by a mixture of smells,

those of grease and garlic preponderating; but she tried to hide the discomfort she felt by putting out her powers of entertainment, laughing at the overpowering smell of 'French violets,' as it was her whim to call onions, and telling the doctor of an old woman at Scotswood who had actually complained to her that the place was 'dunted with nightingales and tainted with violets.' But even her bright spirit was not proof against the impure air by which she was surrounded. She soon ceased to be gay, the quiet deserted stillness of the place so oppressed her, and she looked anxiously about, longing for some means of exit.

The room in which they stood—for they could not feel sufficiently at home to sit down—was a long narrow slip, with two doors in it, one being as far removed from the other as possible; and when their uneasiness was about reaching its culminating point, the farther one opened and admitted a figure so frightful as to banish all minor considerations from their thoughts. At first it was a matter of speculation whether the creature they beheld was human, and a minute after whether so huge a specimen of humanity should be classed under the gender masculine or feminine. May's eyes expanded with fright, and she rushed to the door nearest to where they stood, but, as was the case with the windows, it did not seem made to open. Dr. Milman threw himself against it with all his force, but ineffectually; then they exerted their united strength on the window, but all to no purpose, and they could do nothing but wait and contemplate the creature before them. From its muscular development it might be supposed to be a man, but its dress—a loose brown stuff gown, with a borderless nightcap—suggested a doubt. Then the full face and large features, so ugly and terrible, set off as they were by the nightcap, caused them to decide that it could not be a woman. May had often remarked on the extreme plainness

of the old Frenchwomen as they sat wrapped in their long chintz-pattern cloaks on the steps of the confessionals; but did ever mortal eyes behold anything so repulsive as this? She trembled visibly, and as the creature shuffled further into the room and began biting its fingers, she hid her face in her hands until her attention was aroused by a harsh voice calling out, 'Josef! Josef!' and through the door, which was out of sight from the end of the room where she stood, a shower of food fell in confusion on the floor. At the sight of this the poor creature prostrated himself, Nebuchadnezzar fashion, and began to feed. The sight was too revolting, and, seeing Josef's attention thus diverted, they made a rush to the door by which he had entered. But it would seem that Josef liked company, for he manifested unmistakable displeasure at their intention, and resuming his natural position, and throwing his long arms straight against his sides, uttered a shriek as if defying them to make another attempt at escape.

Dr. Milman drew May's arm within his, and whispered composure; then placing himself between her and the unhappy cause of her distress, persevered in his attempts to leave the room. Did that door stick also? Or was it locked? May's blood curdled as she stood with her back exposed to any attack Josef might think fit to make, when—whenever was even a lover's voice more welcome?—Pierre's was heard in the passage. With a brisk turn of the handle, he opened the hitherto unyielding door, and to his great consternation witnessed the scene above described. Such an one would have caused excitement even in a dramatic performance. No wonder, then, that May, standing in close contact with this strange being, should be shivering violently.

'This is anything but hospitable,' said the doctor, looking towards the poor creature, who had now resumed his meal,

while he gladly led May, who was almost fainting, from the room.

'*Pardon! mille pardons, Mademoiselle!*' said Pierre, in a voice of unmistakable concern, as he observed her shrinking form and face pale with fear. He protested to the woman of the house against the carelessness that had led to such a mischance, and added to Dr. Milman by way of explanation, 'He is *sourd, muet, et un crêtin*, quite harmless, but—,' he shrugged his shoulders as if appreciating the shock such a sight must have been to the pretty creature trembling before him. May tried to justify herself for what she felt to be weakness, with the thought that she could have borne anything—the extremest personal discomfort—rather than that to which she had been subjected, and so soon as she was fairly outside the door, endeavoured to reassure Pierre, by saying kindly, that 'the misadventure could be no fault of his,' adding, as he gallantly placed his boot as stepping-stones to keep her from the mire, 'I have come to ask you to help us, M. Pierre.'

The man looked as if he would be delighted to put himself at her command, whereupon she put him in possession of the circumstances of Alsie's absence, adding, that 'she applied to him, because she knew that Alsie's face was not unfamiliar to him, and that most likely he would be able to judge of the places of amusement to which she was likely to find her way.'

The man looked excited, and said, as if recollecting himself, that he had seen her walking with a young Englishman a night or two since, and that as he appeared to him to be in a rank of life above her own, he had had the curiosity to watch them, but that he had lost sight of them in the *Rue St. Jacques*.

May coloured and said earnestly, that if he could help them she should be so very much obliged.

Pierre, after remaining thoughtful a little, replied that 'he would search Paris from end to end before he 'd give it up.'

Meanwhile, the doctor, who had been watching the man observantly, interposed, saying, that promptness was necessary, and that if Pierre would give him the benefit of his experience, the search should commence at once.

Pierre acquiesced in his opinion, and the doctor not intending to risk exposing May to another such scene as that from which they had just escaped, conveyed her safely to St. Jullien's, and gave her into the safe custody of Madame de Bernonville, while Pierre lost no time, but at once prosecuted his inquiry in the neighbourhood of the *Rue St. Jacques*. As a man of the world and of Paris experience, he was a very suitable agent to act in such a matter, and as in this case his zeal was quickened by gratitude, he found much satisfaction in the hope of being of real use to those who had helped him in his emergency.

Arrived at St. Jullien's, May sought Helen, and began a graphic description of her adventure; but a look from her warned her against putting Frances in possession of the cause of her errand, and she left the room.

Helen followed to learn further particulars, and they were standing outside the door talking together when two letters were handed to them.

One was from Lord Agramont, with an enclosure from Miss Aberley, the other from Mrs. Bosanquet to May; and they parted to enjoy their respective communications.

Why does Frances watch her sister's expression with concern while she is reading her letter? and why does Helen's colour come and go so quickly?

Helen is beginning to doubt whether she is not reaping what she has sown — whether Lord Agramont's grateful allusion to

Dr. Milman for reminding her of her duty, does not savour both of satire and rebuke, and whether such rebuke is undeserved.

She looks very grave and quiet as she reads that her guardian has asked Dr. Milman to send him a daily bulletin as to Frances' health, and wonders if he would have done so had she shown herself a more willing correspondent: she even begins to doubt whether she has not been at fault in being so extremely jealous over herself, lest she should manifest a degree more affection to Lord Agramont than she was sure would be returned by him with interest; and closes her letter, querying whether her course of action has been altogether quite what it should have been.

Frances asked for news, and Helen replied, 'It is a letter from Lord Agramont, full of interest in you;' and she proceeded to read the enclosure from Miss Aberley, in which that lady spoke of her speedy return to England.

Frances claimed a reading of her guardian's letter, and enjoyed all the kind thoughts contained in it, quite oblivious to any latent reproof to her sister; while Helen turned to her drawing, and sat in absorbed meditation.

She had been learning of late, that religion was not disjoined from the ordinary affairs of life, but that its tendency was to rectify one's conduct even in little things; and her conscience urged that she had not behaved as she should have done to Lord Agramont. It was useless trying to persuade herself that under the circumstances she could not have done otherwise: a faithful monitor would whisper that pride had given rise to a weak sensibility in points where her own honour was concerned, and that she had been courting that indifference on the part of her guardian which she so deprecated. She asked herself if that was one of 'the little foxes that spoil the vines,' against which the doctor had warned her to beware; and called

to mind one of his parting injunctions to her, 'never to leave even a little sin unrepented, but to keep a conscience clear both towards God and towards man, by at once confessing and redressing even a small wrong;' but she did not see her course of action clearly, and felt she was in the same sort of dilemma she had before been with her guardian. Those who know the wounds of the spirit to be even more real than the 'vulgar pains the body suffers,' will know how to sympathize with, even though they blame her.

But we must leave her to her meditations, and follow Dr. Milman, who, shortly after leaving St. Jullien's, met Pierre at a place appointed.

During his absence, the man had learned that two people, answering the description of those for whom they were in search, had been seen going into an hotel in the *Rue St. Jacques*, and as soon as he had Dr. Milman to enforce his claim on Alsie, he went thither, and set about his work in a way that would successfully baffle any precautions that might have been taken for Alsie's detention. When he and the doctor entered the court-yard of the hotel where Pierre had reason to believe she was detained, and had spoken to the proprietress, whom they found sitting at the desk of her *bureau* in her night-dress; they were referred to the *concierge* to furnish them with candles (for although the daylight outside had not begun to wane, it was quite dark in the house). The next thing was a shriek for 'Emilie,' the landlady's daughter, who was summoned to show them to the rooms occupied by the *Anglaises*.

Emilie was a young woman, dressed *en pleine toilette*, her cheeks highly rouged, and her hair frizzed like an Indian's wig: there was an air about her that highly offended Dr. Milman's taste, and he did not look by any means conciliating; but Pierre,

who, as the man of the world, saw it would be to their advantage to propitiate her by a little pleasantry, treated her with more deference; whispering that 'quiet and secrecy would be required for the accomplishment of their plan, and that her aid in the matter would not pass unacknowledged.'

Upon this intimation she became a ready agent in the service, seeming rather to like the prospect of detecting an intrigue, and led them up a dirty stone staircase, through some dark passages, into one from which an entrance to the rooms occupied by the *Anglaises* might be made.

That part of the house was only lighted by a skylight, and seemed to be cut off from all means of communication with the outer world. Here Emilie stopped to give them the desired information by saying,

'*M. l'Anglais* has two rooms, the *troisième* from here. In the *seconde* is a *jeune fille*—she weeps much: there are two doors to the room—if you are *tranquille*, and shut the first, you can hear the voices. There are two gentlemen there at present; one is English.'

It was not in the nature of either of our detectives to play eavesdropper, and they at once gave a decided knock at the inner door, which they found to be ajar.

Supposing it to be some of the people of the house, Bryant, for it was he who answered, inquired what was wanted, and as they waited for him to come forward, Dr. Milman heard him say distinctly,

'If what we are expecting happens, we have it all our own way; but until I got that letter I was quite at sea.'

The sinister expression of his face struck him as it appeared in the doorway, and a cowering in his attitude convinced him that some mischief was plotting. It was evident that they

would not be invited to enter, now that they were found to be strangers; and Pierre, with a move of his powerful shoulder, pushed the door, and kept it open sufficiently to see what was going on inside. There was a very dim light in the room, and the furniture, floors, and wainscot being of oak, made it difficult to see objects clearly; but he could discern a dark figure, who seemed anxious to move farther into the gloom. Dr. Milman addressed Bryant with cool dignity, by simply stating that they were in search of a young woman who had unexpectedly left her home, and desired to be admitted to an interview with her, in order to learn the cause of her absenting herself; adding that they had no intention of making an assault on her liberty of action.

This appeal was at first met by an equivocal rejoinder on the part of Bryant; but the absence of *finesse* on the doctor's part appeared to foil him: he felt a coward, blushed a little, and seemed inclined to surrender at once; but recovering himself, he asked boldly upon what grounds his privacy was invaded, and was about to shut the door, when he found that Pierre had so placed himself as to render him unable to do so, except by opposing force to force. Without seeming to regard his intention, the doctor repeated the object of his errand, and Bryant replied indifferently, 'that he believed there was a young woman in the house, whom he had shown to a lodging last night, but that he should think she was old enough to take care of herself.'

Pierre was trying hard to see the countenance of the dark figure in the background, but could not succeed. His hat was deep down over his brows, and his back turned; he was reading some papers, and apparently uninterested in the altercation between his friend and his visitors.

Having found that Alsie was not in the room, there was no longer reason why they should remain, and Pierre made his

way to that which had been pointed out by Emilie as in the occupation of Alsie, and hammered loudly at the door.

'If you can make her hear, it's more than any one else can,' said Bryant, slamming the door of his room as if to defy further intrusion.

For a time Pierre's knock called forth no response, but at last Alsie's voice was heard saying, 'Is it you, please, M. Pierre?'

Pierre told her to open the door at once; and after some hesitation, and a great deal of dragging about of furniture, she removed a barricade from the door, thus leaving Pierre free to enter the room. She looked the picture of shame-facedness: her eyes swollen with crying, her face dirty, her hair dishevelled, and stood nervously plucking at a dirty artificial flower that had formed part of her last night's ornaments, waiting for Pierre to put the first question. On his asking her how and why she came there, she replied that she had often wished to go and see the places in the *Champs Elysées* where the dancing and singing was going on,—it *looked so like fairyland*, and that as young Mr. Bryant was so friendly as to offer to treat her, she did not see as there could be much harm in it, adding, especially as it seemed so pleasant to see some one from the old place. Here she burst into a fit of crying: perhaps she was comparing the dark, dingy room, in which she had spent such a miserable night and day, to the pretty lodge at Scotswood, and heartily wishing she had never seen Paris.

Pierre asked her sternly why she did not return at night? to which she answered, that she was whirled round and round until she became so giddy as not to know a bit how time was passing, and then found it was too late to get in at St. Jullien's, so that she was obliged to ask Mr. Bryant to show her somewhere where she could pass the night.

Pierre pointed to the clock, saying that there was no excuse for her not returning early in the morning, when Alsie, glancing in disgust at the finery which by daylight looked only fit for a penny show girl, asked appealingly, 'How could I, M. Pierre?'

Her expression was pretty and modest, and the demand for sympathy was not unheeded by Pierre; who, upon hearing that she had neither bonnet nor cloak, proposed to go and borrow one for her, and left the room, for the purpose of making way for Dr. Milman to enter.

The poor girl had re-settled herself in a state of despondent wretchedness, loathing the very sight of a dress which only the evening before had been most attractive in her eyes; but at the entrance of the doctor she rose and curtseyed, and seemed as if she would be glad of any catastrophe that would hide her from his sight.

He addressed her kindly, but very seriously, showing her how she was suffering the penalty of broken laws; and as the poor girl recognized the congruity between what he said and the whisperings of her own conscience, she looked as if she deserved punishment. On his expressing his disappointment that his Sunday lessons had been so entirely disregarded by her, she dropped a curtsey (in acknowledgment of the respect a good girl naturally feels to one who has been her teacher in holy things) and stood as if wishing to appear reverently attentive, while her thoughts were wandering as to how she could meet her young mistress and Miss Douglas, how Mrs. Sylvie would look down upon her, and how she could get into the house unobserved, until her speculations were brought to a close by the return of Pierre, who had brought with him the much-desired covering. Gladly enveloping herself in the ample folds of the cloak, she stood humbly waiting for further orders. Dr. Milman requested

Pierre to see her into a *voiture*. Pierre's experience suggested that it would be more politic of him to see her safely to St. Jullien's; so, after doing as the doctor requested him, he mounted the box, perceiving that under the circumstances she might prefer having the inside of the carriage to herself.

Alsie begged that they might not drive up to the door, as she hoped to be able to dress herself before being seen; and Pierre parted with her, advising her to go at once and make a frank confession of her fault to her mistress, and to remember in future that Paris was not a place for a young woman like her to be out in alone, adding, in a fatherly way, that he hoped she had not acted intentionally wrong, but in ignorance of the mischief to which such thoughtless proceedings might lead. He spoke English with the precision often adopted in using an acquired language, and Alsie thought, 'What a gentleman he is, to be sure!'

'Well, Alsie, am I to scold or pity you?' said May, looking at the girl's swollen eyes and pale face, as she appeared before her in a dress the very pink of propriety. 'I told you I did not wish you to go out; but it seems that my wish was not an effective restriction.'

Any one who knew May would have detected that she was sadly out of spirits; her voice was so unlke itself, and her language far too formal to be natural to her.

'I am sorry, Miss, that I am,' said the girl emphatically, and beginning to cry.

'You had better go and talk to Miss Douglas,' returned May. She may perhaps be able to convince you that, as you came here as my maid, you ought to obey my wishes. I have had a great many things to trouble me, and you should not have added to them by causing me all this anxiety. How was I to

know that something very bad had not happened? And if it had been so, what could I have said to your mother?' she added, now impressed with the idea that Alsie was her especial charge.

Alsie's tears fell fast, and May turned away as if to dismiss her.

'If you please, Miss, need I go to Miss Douglas?' asked Alsie. 'Dr. Milman has been scolding me, and M. Pierre.'

May smiled, thinking the poor girl might have had as much scolding as was good for her, and there must have been something in her face that emboldened Alsie to speak further, for she told her of Mr. Bryant's invitation to her to go about with him to different places of amusement, with many of the particulars already related.

'You will have to decide whether you will be in Mr. Bryant's service or mine,' returned May, shortly. 'Have you seen a letter of mine about anywhere?'

Upon this direct question being put to her, Alsie turned very pale, and May's scrutinizing look urged the inquiry.

'Oh, Miss, I 'm sure *now* you will never forgive me,' was the despondent reply. 'He said he would give it me back—that he only just wanted the address; but he has kept it. I didn't see him before I came away, and I forgot all about it.'

'Who are you talking about?' asked May, the truth now beginning to dawn upon her.

'Mr. Bryant, Miss. I knew he was a great friend of master's, and as he said he didn't know his address, I didn't think there would be much harm done if I lent him the letter for a minute, he did want it so very bad.'

May's face wore an expression Alsie had never before seen there, and for a moment she seemed unable to speak.

'I didn't like to disoblige him,' pleaded Alsie.

'You preferred to disoblige me,' returned May. 'I should have thought you would have felt that a letter was as much my property as a ring or a bracelet, and that its abstraction was as much a theft as if you had taken any other property of mine.'

This seemed to present the matter to the girl in a new light, and she said, with a shower of tears,

'If you could forgive me, Miss, I——'

'You must go away, Alsie,' said May, irritably; 'I can't forgive you just now: you ought to have known better.'

> 'Severe she spoke, for sorrow in her heart
> Had wrought unwonted sternness.'

And the girl left the room with an appealing look for mercy.

May fell into a train of musing. If only she could leave all this annoyance! She would inquire of M. de Brignola when he thought of starting for Italy; and if in the meantime Sir Lionel should send her his address, she would propose accompanying him. Excitement and anxiety were telling upon her: she looked really ill; and Helen, joining her, and mistaking the cause of her grief, said, by way of consolation,

'I think Alsie seems penitent. She is busy polishing up your toilet ornaments, and crying bitterly.'

'My grief is less generous than you imagine,' returned May, colouring. 'I am as much a dupe as Alsie. How is Frances?'

'She lies still in the same quiet way,' said Helen, as if not satisfied with her symptoms. 'She has been inquiring for you.'

May said she should like to see her, and a few minutes afterwards entered the sick-room.

Dr. Milman was there before her. She was glad to be able to thank him for taking so much trouble on her account; and

he put a few questions to her as to her former relations with William Bryant.

She told him that he was the son of Sir Lionel's lawyer, but that he was not at all a gentleman, and that he had decoyed Alsie to an interview to obtain from her intelligence that he knew to be purposely withheld, at the same time mentioning the abstraction of the letter.

All looked concerned that Alsie should have been guilty of so gross a breach of trust, and Dr. Milman was confirmed in his opinion that Bryant meant mischief.

'He seems to be a friend of one of the professors here,' he remarked; and the entrance of Dr. Andrews put a stop to further conversation on the subject.

CHAPTER XXI.

'The air was hushed, and still and close
As a sick man's room, when he taketh repose
An hour before death.'

SIR Lionel Shelley is looking out from a window o his hotel in the *Piazza del Popolo*, at Rome. The place wears its usual Sunday aspect, which is one of more than every-day life and bustle. Streams of carriages are passing up the celebrated drive to *Monte Pincio*, the greater proportion of which are filled with English people or foreigners of distinction. Groups from the numbers assembled in the pleasant well-kept gardens congregate on the Terrace, to take in a view of the Eternal City, and try in vain to count the seven hills on which it is said to have been built. The twin churches of *San Maria di Monte Santo* and *San Maria dei Miracoli* stand sentinel on either side of the entrance to the *Corso*, and, by their open doors, invite the entry of any stray pedestrian, or those on their way to the English service that is being carried on a few hundred yards outside the gates.

A gay carriage, such as a sheriff uses in England, draws up to the steps leading to the church of *San Maria del Popolo* (the one built over the spot where the ashes of Nero were dis-

covered, as a protection against the supernatural visitants that haunted the place); a priest alights, and, with downcast eyes and humble mien, slowly enters the sacred edifice, followed at a respectful distance by two six-feet-high footmen, conspicuous less for their humility of demeanour than for their cocked hats and demonstrative calves. The water from the fountain falls lazily and musically into its granite basin, and occasionally some pretty oxen pass through the *Porto* to slake their thirst at its crystal stream. Peasants with square-folded white head-dresses, fanciful bodices and aprons, long ear-rings, and coral necklaces, add to the picturesqueness of the scene. But Sir Lionel, while apparently watching them, has his thoughts entirely preoccupied. He turns away from the stir and bustle in which he has so often taken part, and re-reads a letter for the third time, then sits down in the easiest seat he can find, and becomes absorbed in reverie. He is feeling very far from well and far from home, and that a few minutes' conversation with his old friend Dr. Coleridge would be very acceptable to him; thinks that perhaps the Roman climate, which is said to act unfavourably on people of plethoric habit or of hypochondriacal tendency, may be acting prejudicially on him, and that he had better decide upon a change. While sitting thus, and gazing vacantly on the decorations of the vaulted ceiling of the room, wondering, among other things, when the best-known English physician would return to the city, a smash, followed by an altercation, drew him again to the window.

The noise was caused by one of the *facchini* carelessly throwing some luggage on to the lamps of a carriage, and then arguing with the *vetturino* as to who should pay the damage.

Satisfied as to the origin and nature of the excitement, he again turned from the window, and, in doing so, was alarmed

by a feeling of weight on one side of him; and not without reason, for the minute after, he slipped and fell on the floor.

The hotel at which he was staying was one of those grand and gloomy houses which do not suit the general taste, but which are either occupied by grandees, travelling with large families and inexhaustible purses, or left quite empty, in which grass grows in the courtyard and the waiters lounge about as if they had not sufficient to occupy them. At that time there were very few people in it, and the servants were by no means on the alert as to the requirements of those who were; but they amused themselves cracking jokes on passers-by, rather than attending to the business of the hotel.

Sir Lionel lay for hours in a state of partial insensibility, without any one being aware of his illness, until at last Vincent entered the room to ask if he were ready for dinner, and discovered him lying as has been described. He at once raised his suffering master, and, summoning aid, sent immediately for a medical man, who pronounced the seizure to be a slight attack of paralysis. An open letter on the table suggested the inquiry, 'Had he had anything to trouble him?' but Vincent, though an old and faithful servant, could only hint his suspicions that such might be the case; and the doctor urged the necessity of his being kept quite free from all anxiety.

This was about as practical advice as is often given by doctors in our own country, who recommend a poor stipendiary on two hundred a year, with a large family of children depending on his income, to pass the winter in the south of France, or a dressmaker's apprentice to take a carriage airing daily. Ease of mind was not purchasable even with Sir Lionel's wealth.

When the fact of his illness became known, inquiries were made concerning him by one or two English gentlemen, with

whom he had previously interchanged remarks on the staircase or in the courtyard; and some of the officials, who had their quarters close by in the precincts of the church of *Santa Maria*, came to look after him; but in a general way there was nothing to break the monotony of a sick-room. Before his attack he used to like the company of the priests; they would take pains to give him information on any subject in which he happened to be dilettanteing, and their gloomy quarters possessed for him much such a charm as the print and bookseller's shop at Scotswood had done. Now he scarcely recognized his former friends; all other interests seemed merged in his one intense longing to be at Scotswood again.

He used sometimes to talk as if he were ready to start at once for England, when his servant would check his impatience by reminding him of the necessity of waiting a few days longer to get up his strength. At other times he would be conscious of such a failure of the vital principle as to lead him to the conclusion that he was fast declining; but when he rallied again, the hope of seeing Scotswood would grow strong within him.

One day Vincent had left him alone for awhile, having run up the ascent from the *Piazza*, to the gardens, to procure refreshment for mind and body, when a sharp rap at the door of the invalid's room startled its inmate, which rap was followed immediately by the entrance of William Bryant.

The young man entered the room as if sure of his welcome, expressed extravagant concern at finding his old friend thus prostrated, and then, in a quite-at-home way, affected surprise at his long absence from Scotswood; gave a running epitome of news, not forgetting to laugh at the absurd rumours rife as to the accident to himself; denouncing the originators of them in no measured terms; and winding up by saying that he had seen

May in Paris, and that she was pining for home. The suddeness of his appearance, and the excitement of seeing one on whom his thoughts had lately dwelt anything but pleasurably, quite overcame Sir Lionel; and when Vincent returned, he found him with his head drooping low on his breast.

Vexed and indignant, both at the intrusion and its results, the man said decidedly,

'I must ask you to leave this room, sir! I have orders to keep my master quiet. It seems to me your visit will bring on another seizure.'

'One word!' persisted Bryant, making his way up to Sir Lionel: 'I think perhaps you would like me to write for you to Miss Shelley. One of the professors at St. Jullien's, a gentleman with whom you travelled from Amiens to Paris, is shortly about to start for this place in company with his sister: to accompany them would be a safe and pleasant means of escort for her;' adding in a by-the-bye sort of way, as if it was notan affair of any moment, 'Ithought I would apprise you of the opportunity.'

'Let her come, let her come,' jerked out poor Sir Lionel, his speech sadly indistinct from paralysis; 'we can travel home together.'

And without giving him time to alter his mind, Bryant left the room.

After this the invalid appeared to be sinking fast: an unconquerable lassitude crept over him, and his intellect became gradually more and more clouded; so much so, that Vincent had begun to fear it would be hopelessly impaired, when, hearing him murmuring to himself as if something were troubling him, he stooped his head to listen to what he had to say, and discovered that his mind was sufficiently clear to be uneasy that he had been at fault in his arrangements for May.

'Can't *you* go for her? She would rather have some one from home with her,' was the short but painfully enunciated outpouring of his trouble.

The man understood the grounds of his misgivings, and replied that he was not well enough to be left to strangers, but that he had better write and tell his young mistress to stay where she was for the present.

'She wants to come,—she wants to see me,' returned Sir Lionel, commisseratingly. 'Perhaps it had better be left as it is.'

But although he did not for a moment suspect that Bryant's proposal had any stratagetical significance, he felt that May would be vexed at his having been made the medium of communication between them, and regretted the step he had taken. Such was the state of things when Bryant paid him his second visit; which visit took place at the same time as that of the doctor. As he represented himself and his father as old friends of Sir Lionel's, the doctor treated him with confidence, and inquired if it were quite impossible for him to give his friend the benefit of his company for a time, urging the request by enlarging upon the solace of a friendly face to a dying man, and the advantage of a second attendant in case of need.

Sir Lionel overheard the proposition, and a remembrance of Bryant's grasping propensities did for a moment obtrude itself; but his mind not being strong enough to support the evidence against him, a thought of the injury he himself had inflicted on the young man, and the unjust suspicion he had since entertained of him, obliterated all previous considerations, and he offered no resistance while the doctor exerted himself to secure for him what in his case especially seemed so very desirable, the services of a *friend.*

On first hearing of the arrangement Vincent was very wroth;

but it was no small relief to him to have some one at hand to take a turn at watching; and by degrees he became reconciled to it. Bryant had an easy way of accommodating himself to any mode of life that would further his ambitious schemes, and soon made himself indispensable to Sir Lionel's comfort. He helped him to complete a collection of books he had begun to make before his illness, and did all in his power to beguile the time of his necessary stay in Rome; while he would talk of his removal to England as a thing easy of accomplishment with himself and May as companions, though quite impracticable but for his opportune arrival. The fact of their mutual acquaintance with places and people was a link between them, and Sir Lionel frequently accused himself for having thought the young man capable of betraying anything the revelation of which would act to his detriment, and blamed his folly in leaving Scotswood.

One day Bryant was giving an account of Miss Bosanquet's last hours, according to a report in circulation in the neighbourhood; when poor Sir Lionel was so overcome that tears of grief poured down his furrowed cheeks, and he said, apologetically,

'I can't bear anything now.'

Bryant, thinking that such weakness was a warning that he would soon follow her whom he was deploring, replied,

'I ought not to have alluded to anything so painful. I have purposely abstained from mentioning the little business that brought me to this place, for fear of affecting your health prejudicially, and yet I have erred thus quite inadvertently.'

'I'm sure it was,' said Sir Lionel, briskly, to whom the mention of Scotswood had acted as a stimulant. 'If there is any business of consequence, I can hear what you have to say about it.'

'It is an inconvenient time for my father to spare me,' re-

turned Bryant, 'and he thought he should like you to look over the business he had in hand for you when you left; but he would wish me to be quite at your service.'

'Ah, he was making out a new will! so he was—one more in detail than the last will. That I'll talk to him about when I get home, which will be as soon as my fairy comes. I'll get you to write to the people at the Warren, that they may have all ready for us.'

'As you will. I should be sorry to allow our convenience to weigh against yours, whatever may be the inconvenience to me,' was the obliging reply.

'You were not going to leave me?' pleaded Sir Lionel, oblivious to an expression which belied all disinterestedness.

'By no means, if it be your pleasure I should stay.'

And by such fair speeches Bryant impressed poor Sir Lionel with the idea that he was his debtor.

May was expected to arrive in a few days, and Bryant spent the intervening time in winding up affairs with the booksellers and making preparations for their journey. Sir Lionel was so helpless as to dread the effort that would be required, but still so eager and intent on the prosecution of the journey as not to care to allow his uneasiness to appear. His drowsiness particularly distressed him, and he would sometimes ask to be left alone, lest that obvious proof of weakness should be adduced as a reason for his unfitness for the journey. Such had one day been the case, when Vincent, entering the room noiselessly, found William Bryant acting as Sir Lionel's amanuensis. At the sight of an unexpected visitor, the pen dropped as if involuntarily from Bryant's hand, and Vincent knew his presence to be an obstruction to what was going on, by seeing a blank sheet immediately laid upon that upon which he had been writing.

This accidental proof of underhandedness was a warning to him to leave his master as little as possible; but, choosing a time when he knew Bryant had gone to a cameo engraver's, to fetch some ornaments, the carving and setting of which Sir Lionel had been superintending previous to his illness, he went to the *bureau*, and talked over the facilities, or rather difficulties, of the proposed journey. It had been settled that it was to be made by water, as the inns they would have to put up at on land were quite unsuitable as resting-places for one in Sir Lionel's dependent condition; and the proprietor of the hotel reminding him that there was a great doubt whether there would be suitable accommodation to be had on board the *Messageries Imperiales* unless bespoken some days beforehand, and that the Italian boats were quite unfit for passengers, he hurried off to assure himself as to particulars.

When Bryant returned he found him absent, and on learning the nature of his errand, decided that now was his time to effect an object for which he had long sacrificed both his independence and self-respect. There was little remaining to be done, but that little could not be effected without help, and he left the hotel in search of that which he needed.

Vincent's business occupied a longer time than he expected, and upon his return, great was his astonishment to find his master's usually quiet room invaded by strangers. For a moment he stood at the door taking in the scene there presented to him. Although the room was nearly dark, a bright ray of sunlight fell directly on the figure of Sir Lionel, who, propped up in bed, was endeavouring to steady a pen between the second and third fingers of an almost lifeless hand. The outlines of a group of close-buttoned ecclesiastics were clearly visible standing in attitudes expressive of interest in the success of the

attempt, while Bryant stood at hand with ink ready to supply more of that fluid should it be necessary for his purpose. The effect of light and shade was so striking that an artist would have seized upon it for a study; but Vincent, ruthlessly disregarding any artistic considerations, at once destroyed it by deliberately crossing the room, and opening the jalousies, to throw light upon the circumstance that had so surprised him.

Confronting the group, as if to demand an explanation of that which was being transacted, he said, looking reproachfully at Bryant,

'If you want to bring on another attack, sir, you 're just setting the right way to work.'

'It was something that was necessary to be done,' whispered Bryant, confidentially, and thanking his friends for the assistance they had rendered him in the little matter, he smilingly bowed them from the room. In his effort to appear at ease, he unconsciously betrayed extreme nervousness, and Vincent felt convinced that the transaction that had been carried on during his absence was, to say the least, equivocal as to its legitimacy.

CHAPTER XXII.

'It is not according to the laws of Fact that ye have . . . guided yourself, but according to the law of Delusion and unwilful . . . mistake of Fact! and ye are here!'

'IT is *triste* to have to part with our little *biche blanche* so soon,' said Madame de Bernonville, opening the door of the *Boudoir Anglais*, in which Helen and May were sitting together. She held an open letter in her hand, and giving it to May, added, by way of explanation to Helen, 'Sir Lionel Shelley is ill, and *ennuyant* for her company. He has heard that our *aimable professeur* is about to visit Rome, and is anxious that she should make the voyage under his care.'

A thoughtful expression passed over May's face, and, much as she had wished for any change that would put her in direct communication with Sir Lionel, an undefined impression possessed her that evil would be the result of the proposed journey.

The letter, though not in her guardian's handwriting, was written as from him, and the summons was peremptory. There seemed no choice for her—she must go. A strange coincidence, she thought, that this letter should have come just as she had wished it might. She asked herself why the pleasure to be anticipated from the journey seemed like a thing of the past—

what foundation there was for so sudden a change in her wishes; and, deciding that there was none whatever, tried to feel that the good times were really coming again, and said in a cheerful voice,

'Then I am really to make preparations for a journey to Rome?'

Madame shrugged her shoulders, and Helen looked grave.

'Could M. de Brignola have arranged this?' asked May of herself, as Madame left the room. She thought him capable of doing all sorts of kindnesses without letting any one recognize him as the doer of them.

It would have been sad work for Helen to part with May under any circumstances, and she knew that Frances would feel the parting even more keenly than she would herself; but that she should leave them in the way proposed, would be far more painful than if she were going under a more satisfactory arrangement, and she remarked, absently,

'I do not like your travelling under such escort. Alsie has not proved trustworthy, and M. de Brignola is in fact a stranger.'

Here May was summoned from the room; and, after thinking for a time, Helen determined to set the case before Dr. Milman: he had English notions, and might see the matter in the light in which it presented itself to her. She knew that where he felt his intervention would be of use, it would not be withheld; and, going at once to her desk, wrote, sealed, and dispatched an epistle, telling Sylvie to deliver it to the doctor himself.

Meanwhile, May, feeling a reluctance to set about preparations for her journey, went listlessly from one place to another, until, at last, she found herself in the room occupied by the French girls, and apprised them of her projected journey.

Hearing they were about to lose her, they were vehement in their expressions of regret; for, in spite of the affront she had offered to Julie, she had not failed to make herself loved, even by her.

May could warmly respond to their regret,—except for the suspense in which she had been kept, her stay at St. Jullien's had been a very pleasant time.

Viewing fitness from an entirely worldly point of view, Madame de Bernonville was admirably fitted for the task she had undertaken. She was judicious in not imposing unnecessary restrictions on the inclinations of her pupils; and finding May had been in the habit of acting according to her own will — that will being under the control of an innate sense of propriety — she had spared her all the little frets that she had felt irksome under Miss de la Touche's jurisdiction, while she had helped her to prosecute her studies in a way to satisfy even her hankering for knowledge. Besides this, May was warmly attached to Helen and Frances, and at the present time very anxious as to the result of the illness of the latter.

Julie tried to fire her imagination with the thought of travelling in such delightful company as that of M. de Brignola, saying that once she should have liked it above all things, but that since he had been her confessor, he had been so awfully severe that he had made her quite frightened of him.

'No wonder, considering the nature of your confessions!' chimed in Gabrielle.

'Does M. de Brignola hear confessions?' asked May, in surprise.

'He does not generally confess penitents while he is in France,' returned Gabrielle; 'but Madame so much prefers him to any one else, that he makes an exception to his rule in this case.'

Here May was summoned to Madame's *boudoir*, and was informed that M. de Brignola and his sister would start on their journey the following evening; that they would take the night express to Lyons, and lose as little time as possible on the road.

There was something practical and businesslike in the sound of the arrangement; and May, naturally buoyant and light-hearted, dispelled all misgivings, and seriously contemplated preparing for her departure.

As a step in the right direction, she rang for Alsie, and told her that she would have to pack up at once, for that they were to join Sir Lionel in Rome.

Since her *escapade*, Alsie had been very demure and downcast, and had scarcely presumed to speak to her young mistress on any matter except of business; but the thought of a journey excited her, and she inquired eagerly if that was where the early Christians were buried, and kept just as fresh as if they were alive, and where a real bone of some saint was preserved moulded up with some of his fat.

May laughed at this sentimental mode of preserving one's friends, and inquired who had talked to her of Rome.

Alsie replied, 'M. de Brignola,' and blushed deeply.

'When have you seen M. de Brignola?' asked May.

'That night I stopped out, Miss.' And she began hurriedly to collect any stray articles belonging to her mistress that were scattered about the room.

'Don't hurry so frantically,' said May, in a voice we should pronounce to have been peevish, but for our unwillingness to admit that a voice generally so remarkable for its sweetness was capable of such a variation. 'How came you to see M. de Brignola, then?'

'He is a friend of young Mr. Bryant's,' returned Alsie.

'Are you quite sure of what you are saying?' asked May.

'Yes, Miss; he was talking to him the night I met him, and was so good as to take me into one of the churches, in which all the altars were ornamented with white flowers. I walked about with him ever so long,' she added, evidently appreciating the honour.

'How was it you did not mention it before?' asked May.

'Mr. Bryant told me it would be as well not to say anything about anything,' said the girl. 'I was before my time, and he was obliged to go away, so he asked that gentleman to take care of me for him for a few minutes.'

May thought that Alsie must be mistaking M. de Brignola's identity, but that if she were correct, the meeting with Bryant had been accidental. It was an absurdity to think of two such men being friends. And, the girl being called away, she sat meditating on M. de Brignola's great and grand qualities—his heroism as represented by himself, and his general superiority in the judgment of others—until Alsie returned to say that M. Pierre had brought a note for Miss Douglas, and that as she had told him that they were going away, he said he should like to speak one word to her.

May went, and, on reaching the hall, found Pierre awaiting her, hat in hand, and looking so like a gentleman that she was for once unready with a fit mode of address; but he anticipated her by saying that he wished to bid her a *bon voyage*, and to thank her for all her great kindness to him.

'We all feel to have received such a rebound of return benefits as to be your debtor,' she replied, warmly.

There was a sadness in her tone, and the man said, inquiringly,

May's apprehensions.—P. 299.

'I hope Mademoiselle Alsie has not caused you anxiety, or seen any more of her friends?' The latter part of his speech was in irony, for he felt that friends would have been more careful of her reputation.

'Who do you mean?' asked May, thinking that from him she might learn the truth of Alsie's statement.

'There was another gentleman with her besides the young Englishman. My good friend, Dr. Milman, said he thought he had seen him here.'

May coloured, and, as Madame appeared in the hall, with renewed thanks Pierre bowed himself out at the door.

May felt so to want some one to whom she could unburden herself, and meeting Helen on the stairs, clung to her, saying,

'I can't expect you to sympathize in my foolish apprehensions; but from some undefined cause, I think of my journey with anything but pleasure.'

'I can quite sympathize,' replied Helen. 'M. de Brignola is a stranger.'

'Oh, I 'm sure he will be all right, and I expect to find his sister charming; but I 'm afraid he knows William Bryant, and you know he is my horror!'

Helen felt concern, and was about to speak, but remembering how invariably withheld confidence had followed any expression of doubt as to M. de Brignola's entire singleness of purpose in his interest in her, she hesitated.

'If M. de Brignola is friends with William Bryant, we may be quite sure it is because he does not know the sort of man he is,' said May, leal-heartedly; 'but Auntie did not wish me to have anything to do with Bryant, and I dread being brought into contact with him. He has always been my scarecrow,' she added, thoughtfully.

'I wish we could assign an adequate reason for your not going,' returned Helen. 'You know I have always had my doubts of Brignola. I have heard that he is out on a proselytizing mission; and when I think of your travelling with him and a beautiful nun to the head quarters of Jesuitry, my alarm is naturally excited,' she added, smiling.

May returned her friend's smile, but said, dejectedly,

'You have never cared for M. de Brignola.'

'On the contrary,' returned Helen, 'I doubt whether I have been more invincible to his charms than even you have been; but knowing that Roman Catholics deem it not only justifiable, but praiseworthy, to take all sorts of byways and crooked turnings to further the interests of their Church, I am suspicious.'

'What ghosts we are conjuring!' said May, merrily; 'and our fears have such different origins. You fear my being induced to take the black veil, and I fear being tormented by my *bête noir*. No doubt, both are equally foundationless. I have not a shade of a substantial reason for apprehending evil. We are to travel by boat and by rail, and it is not at all likely William Bryant will intrude on either. By-the-bye, talking of proselytizing, M. de Brignola is confessor here. Julie expresses herself as dreadfully afraid of him.'

'Perhaps, from an object of fear, he hopes to become one of veneration, as the crocodiles have become in Batavia,' returned Helen, surprised at the secrecy that had kept her until now in ignorance of the fact now revealed to her, adding, by way of an *amende* to the invidiousness of the comparison, 'Julie is foolish enough to make any one angry.'

'I must go and see Fan,' said May.

'I would rather break the news to her gradually,' said Helen. 'She does not know of your going.'

Appreciating the affection for herself manifested in the caution, May put her arm lovingly within that of her friend, and followed with her to the sick-room. Trying to be cheerful, she said that the change from her own thoughts to Fan's sunny presence was as refreshing as passing from a gallery where there was nothing but 'Holy Families' and 'Saints' undergoing martyrdom, to one full of Salvator Rosa's sunny landscapes.

'We are expecting Dr. Milman every minute,' said Helen. 'I wish you would explain to him your cause for apprehension; he might guide you in your difficulty.'

'He does not like M. de Brignola,' said May.

'He does not like the Roman Catholic system,' returned Helen; 'but he is quite capable of judging without bias.'

A minute after, Dr. Milman was present to speak for himself. After a word with Frances, and saying that he had written yesterday to ask Lord Agramont if he would not advise her trying what change of air would do for her, he asked for a few minutes' conversation with Alsie.

Helen saw that he had come prepared to take action, and by some telegraphy informed him that Frances was to be kept in ignorance of all disquieting circumstances. Accordingly, he left that room, and Alsie was sent to him in another.

Mistress Alsie held the doctor in great veneration. She had some sort of a conceit, that if she diverged from the exact truth of her statement, some hidden faculty that he had at his command would enable him to detect her duplicity; and he soon elicited from her all he wanted to know. From her evidence he learned as a fact what he had before suspected—that a treacherous design was on hand to get possession of May, and that mischief of some sort was brewing, although ignorant of the exact nature of it; that M. de Brignola and William

Bryant were associated on the evening of Alsie's abduction; with the additional intelligence—which considerably narrowed any doubt that might have existed as to de Brignola's complicity in the matter—that she remembered opening the gate to the same gentleman twice while Mr. Bryant was ill at Scotswood.

When May was put in possession of these facts, although they satisfied her intuition of impending evil, she strongly resisted a belief so subversive to her trust in human nature generally, and in M. de Brignola especially. On first hearing the charge, there was an elevation in her manner of defending him; and as proof upon proof made matters so obvious as to be indisputable, and questions put by her to Alsie brought out facts more definitely, even then she zealously vindicated him against the charge of deliberate artifice, and maintained that the fact of his inviting her to travel with him need not as a matter of course have any special significance.

Helen felt for her deeply. She knew that the hour she had spent with de Brignola had been her great consolation during her banishment, as she called her sojourn, at St. Jullien's; that his name had been all-sufficing to command her attention even in her idlest moods; that, in fact, she had done what lively, loving, enthusiastic people are apt to do—set up a plaster image, and worshipped it with the impression that it was gold.

As the fact of M. de Brignola's duplicity manifested itself beyond dispute, and May was compelled to acknowledge to herself that her conception, built, according to her notion of things, of the most substantial material, was crumbling to the ground, she found the fact a very bitter one, and went to her room to shed such tears of regret and disappointment as those only can understand who have been placed in similar circumstances.

A loud knock at the *porte cochère* roused her from her dejected attitude, while it caused Helen and her sister to exchange glances of inquiry, for it was seldom such a knock was heard at St. Jullien's.

'It is not unlikely to be de Brignola come to make arrangements for May,' said Helen.

'If it is so, I shall at all risks decline his escort,' returned the doctor, 'even though I should think it necessary to accompany her to Rome myself.'

But those speculations were put to an end by a card being handed to Helen, with the inquiry when the young ladies would see Lord Agramont.

Helen said they would see him immediately, and, grateful for this prompt attention, she came quite out of herself, and expressed her apprehension of inconvenience likely to arise from so hurried a journey, with genuine concern at his having lost his usual night's rest, while Frances lay still, awaiting his recognition and enjoying the tones of a home voice.

After a hearty greeting to Dr. Milman, he went up to her, and lifting aside her curtain in tender fatherly fashion, said, fondly,

'I was not prepared to see you so weak, my poor child! We shall have Miss Aberley requiring us to give an account of ourselves for not taking better care of you. She looks about as substantial as a shimmer of moonlight,' he added, turning to Dr. Milman. Then addressing Frances, 'I've asked your old friend, Dr. Worthington, to have a look at you. He will understand better than any one else how to set you up again.'

On hearing that she was soon to see another English face, Frances' satisfaction was unmistakable; and Lord Agramont observed, looking as if in search for her,

'I must thank my friend May for this opportune arrival. Her mother has been so anxious on her account as to induce me to come and look after her. Your letter was put into my hand just as I was on the point of starting,' he added, addressing himself to Dr. Milman.

The doctor replied that he had doubted if it were possible that his visit could have been in answer to his note; and while Helen, feeling a thrill of disappointment at this confession, went to summon May, Dr. Milman walked with Lord Agramont to the further end of the room, and put him in possession of the whole particulars connected with her proposed journey to Rome.

'There must have been some skilful generaling if it is as you suppose,' was the thoughtful reply; 'happily I am here to put my veto on her departure. Her mother has returned to England exclusively on her account, and wishes for her home at once. This is a sufficient reason for declining the escort. From my knowledge of Shelley, I am not at all sure that Bryant is not acting under his sanction.'

Lord Agramont looked round as if expecting May's entrance, but she was too much disturbed in mind to come quickly; and he went to acquaint Madame de Bernonville with his decision respecting her, and then left the hotel, for rest and refreshment after his hurried journey.

The next day Dr. Worthington arrived, and in a decided, reliable tone of voice, gave it as his opinion that although Frances was alarmingly weak, it was a weakness mainly attributable to fever; that debility was the sole cause of the prostration they witnessed; that he saw no aggravating symptoms whatever, but had every reason to believe that change of air would speedily effect her entire convalescence. He said he should recommend Lord

Agramont to take her back with him to Croyland, adding playfully, she would not much increase the weight of his luggage, and that, once there again, he should expect to see her climb the hills with the agility of a mountain kid.

At this suggestion Frances' eyes danced with pleasure, and she became so excited, that he left her, saying he must go to Morpheus for a draught to send her into dreamland, and that Helen must act dragon at the gates to keep away intruders.

But his verdict had put Helen in such joyful spirits (her love for her sister had lately awakened in all its warmth), that she went to communicate the news which had so gladdened her heart to Lord Agramont; when unfortunately, she found May in comfortable possession of him, seated on his knee. On making this discovery her speech was not so fluent as she intended it should have been, and merely repeating Dr. Worthington's opinion, she left the room. Resolved not to fret herself with ideal grievances, she suppressed all unjust thoughts, and denounced her dissatisfaction as weakness, justly concluding that self-love was imposing upon her judgment, in suggesting that she was not receiving the consideration to which she was entitled. But even while struggling to achieve a victory over herself, and saddened at detecting that a wound she thought had healed was ready to discover itself under any exciting cause, she morbidly decided that she would rely upon self-enjoyment, intellectual and spiritual, and be independent of the kindly notice which had been hitherto so much desired by her.

May no longer doubted the correctness of the inference that had been drawn from Alsie's confession, and was feeling experience to be sadly disenchanting,—that there must be a strange numbness of moral perception in one she had thought capable of the most delicate shades of feeling. She was not inclined

to resist Lord Agramont's decision that she was to go to her mamma, but was glad to leave a place associated in her mind with almost all she had known of sorrow.

They were obliged to remain a few days in Paris, during which time May usurped all Lord Agramont's leisure. Frances seemed to improve daily, and was delighted at the prospect before her. Helen alone was unresponsive to the general expressions of satisfaction. She felt that in leaving Dr. Milman she left the only one in the world with whom she could feel there was a reciprocal sympathy—that when again at Croyland, her old feeling of loneliness would return; and she convinced herself, to her own dissatisfaction, that Lord Agramont's kindness to her, in which she had so rejoiced, had only been the result of pity.

'Instructing her sorrows to be proud,' as Shakespeare has it, her feeling made itself apparent; and Dr. Milman, with a keen-sightedness born of the interest he took in her, observed her manner to be anything but such as he expected or liked to see, and was not surprised to hear Lord Agramont, after thanking him for 'his care and kindness to his girls,' add, 'You have done what I have signally failed in doing—getting at Helen's heart.' And he resolved upon trying to convince her of the error into which she had fallen.

When the day of departure arrived, it was arranged that she should pay a farewell visit to the parsonage, and that the carriage should call for her on its way to the station. Glad to find herself once more in a place fruitful in bright memories, her manner was that of the Helen who had so easily made her way to the good doctor's heart, and it required an effort on his part to say anything that would check the pleasure he saw she felt in being there again. But knowing that her return to the abbey

might be a turning-point in her life, and that she might not again find any one who would feel privileged to act Mentor to her as he had done, after hesitating a minute he said, holding her hand kindly in his own,

'Now that I am about to transfer my privilege of lecturing you, I want you to allow me a few last words.'

Helen looked up: there was so much sense and spirit in her face, that he felt he was venturing on delicate ground, but was resolute, and added,

'Am I wrong in thinking that I detect in your manner towards—your—almost more than father, a—I hardly know what to call it—but a something very likely to engender alienation? Pardon me when I say I have felt sorrow for Lord Agramont, for I see your manner not only puzzles but wounds him. Some little demonstration of affection from one to whom he has acted as a father from infancy to mature age, would not, it seems to me, be by any means out of place. I know your deep regard for your guardian, so that the essential to make such a demonstration acceptable is not wanting—you have no excuse. Do not, then, be content with a mere negation of love; give him the same opportunity of knowing you that you have given me, and this mischievous misunderstanding will die a natural death. Show him your willingness to act a daughter's part to him; remember that the motive — the spirit — may ennoble even the smallest act of service.'

Helen coloured vividly, and he added,

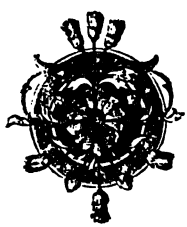
'I must have an assurance of forgiveness. I know it is a subject almost too delicate to bear a touch.'

With a bright look of gratitude she satisfied him; and as the carriage drove to the door, said,

'You will write me occasionally?'

'If God will,' was his reply; and taking her hand in both his, they parted.

No one, to have seen Helen's face then, would have accused her of want of feeling.



CHAPTER XXIII.

'Religion is a mountain air; it is the embalmer of the world. It is myrrh and storax, and chlorine and rosemary. It makes the sky and hills sublime; and the silent song of the stars is it.'

THE three girls travelled to England under Lord Agramont's escort, and after one night spent at the abbey, May rejoined her mamma, who had again taken possession of her old home in the north of England. No sooner had she arrived there than she became conscious that things were not with her as they had once been: there was no excess of arrangement awaiting her, no one feeling that she, of all who formed the household, was the one entitled to attention. The old wainscoted sleeping-chamber that was appropriated to her use, formed a dispiriting contrast to her own sunny room at Scotswood; and without laying her open to the charge of being unduly dependent on material things for her happiness, we may well sympathize in the want of coincidence between the dream of the home-coming, in which she had indulged, and its realization. Mrs. Bosanquet had anticipated her visit with fond expectation, and her welcome was given with genuine tenderness; but it was not in her nature to yield the devotion to which May had from her childhood been accustomed. She had herself, hitherto, been the first consideration

in the house, and there was something in her sweet, Madonna-like face, and mourning attire, that urged her title to be so still.

For the first few days after her arrival May was very restless. She felt at a loss how to employ herself, and longed for Sir Lionel's return, and the occupations which would offer themselves at Scotswood; but Mrs. Bosanquet's sweetness of manner was powerful in attracting those about her, and she soon won May's confidence by sympathizing in the uncertainty to which she was subjected, and admitting it as an excuse for her desultory mood, while at the same time she urged the benefit likely to arise from settled occupation.

May was one evening sitting watching the sunset clouds, as they heaped themselves up in chaotic grandeur, or assumed figures of castles and various forms of fortification — thinking how many castles in the air she had built, and that they had proved as foundationless as those before her, when a servant entered with a letter. Detecting it was from Helen, she seized it eagerly and was soon deep in its perusal. It was not only sensible, but sisterly; and looking pleased and satisfied, she remarked to her mamma 'that she hoped she would soon know Helen,' following up the remark with a transcendental description of her friend's charms. Mrs. Bosanquet smilingly remarked that 'such a picture as she had drawn would convert any ordinary mortal into a caricature,' and asked if she might read the letter. Helen had said something in it about the opportunity May would have of adding to her mamma's happiness; and as her conscience whispered that her presence must have been rather as a cloud than as sunshine in the house, she proposed to give an abstract of it, and rapidly glancing over its pages, said,

'Of course they are hard at work, for Francis is pretty well again. Helen is teaching her some hours every day, and Mr. Harrington, the curate, is helping them both. Lord Agramont is in London.'

This opened an interesting subject of conversation, and the remaining evening hours passed pleasantly. May's powers of description were decidedly beyond the average, and her graphic and discriminating account of the abbey and its inmates was very amusing to Mrs. Bosanquet, whose attentive attitude served to stimulate the enthusiasm of the speaker.

When May awoke the next morning, Helen's letter was the first thought that came to her mind, and she lay comparing her friend's busy, pleasant way of employing herself with her own listless habit. Wondering if it would be in her power to make her mamma happier during the day, she cast about in her mind the most likely way to effect her object. Some fine flowers had come mysteriously to the house late the night before; and the thought suggested itself that she might please her by arranging them as prettily as she could for the breakfast-table. It was a very little thing to do, but it was something; and she rang for Alsie, and, hurrying her more than usual during the process of dressing, was soon dancing down stairs, for the fulfilment of her plan. This was her first effort to identify her pleasures and interests with her mamma's; and when Mrs. Bosanquet came down stairs, and, looking admiringly at the flowers, remarked upon the pleasure of having a daughter's welcome awaiting her, she felt that pleasure must be worked for, but that no labour of love was likely to be unappreciated by Mrs. Bosanquet. During breakfast there was more than usual spirit in the conversation: May had a motive for exerting herself, and to amuse her mamma she gave a

lively sketch of the various characters of the French girls at St. Jullien's, of the unvarying precision of Madame de Bernonville's be-gloved and folded hands; with a spirited touch at the peculiarities of the masters, only excepting M. de Brignola,—she never mentioned him!

'It can't be Daylight,' she exclaimed, as she rapidly passed the window in one of her efforts at caricature. 'How very like!' she added, watching the paces of a mare that was being led up and down before the house. Presently the groom who was leading it turned his face towards her, and recognizing him, she added, 'It *is* Daylight!' and rushed out of the room.

The surprise had been arranged by Lord Agramont, who would have been amply repaid for his kind thoughtfulness if he could have seen the delight with which the pretty creature was received, and have listened to the animated monologue with which she was welcomed.

May pronounced her to be looking as sleek and beautiful as ever, and was anxious to assure herself that confinement to the stable had not robbed her of her 'fleetness of limb;' but there was some difficulty as to her riding gear, and a consultation took place on the subject between herself and her mamma, the result of which was that an old habit was hunted up and submitted to her inspection.

It was evident that her equipments would not be such as she could have commanded at Scotswood; but if the habit was an approach to a fit, she would not allow their want of completeness to interfere with the projected pleasure, and eagerly appropriating the antiquated garment, pronounced that it would do capitally, and went in search of an old wide-awake that had long since given place to Parisian bonnets.

Once mounted on Daylight, she forgot everything but the

pleasure of being able to roam whither her inclination led, and her first impulse was to get as far from the town as possible—to some fair spot that would remind her of England as she had been accustomed to picture it in her absence. Putting Daylight into a canter, she rode on, thinking that in time she would reach something more nearly approaching her ideal of English scenery, while, true to her instinct for the picturesque, a cluster of cottages near a bit of woodland, or a flock of sheep on a distant wold, would cause her to stop in admiration of that which presented itself to her view.

She found that that part of the country was not remarkable for its beauty, but discovered subjects for poetical enthusiasm in what would seem to many minds mere commonplace. She walked and cantered for many miles, until her groom thought it necessary to remind her of the distance she was from home.

On her way back a delicious breeze met her, and the exercise was so exhilarating in its effect, that she arrived at the Old Park House looking sparkling and animated, like the May of days gone by. Alsie met her in the passage, and told her that Lord Agramont was with her mamma.

No news except that Sir Lionel was awaiting her could have been more acceptable, and with pleasure and surprise she hastened into his presence. He met her, as had always been his habit, in a parental fashion; and after listening to her warmly expressed thanks for sending Daylight, and inquiries as to her friends at Croyland, took advantage of Mrs. Bosanquet's leaving the room to put her in possession of a subject of interest that lay very near his own heart — viz., 'that he had obtained a promise from her mamma that she would let him take care of her in future, and that she would wake up the old abbey by going to live there as Lady Agramont.'

Quite unprepared for such a piece of intelligence, May did not at first respond; but when he asked her aid in making Mrs. Bosanquet feel at home at Croyland, by talking to her about the place and the people, and telling her that she would like to feel the abbey to be at least her second home, she seemed to awake to the real state of things, and listened with interest to allusions to the love he had had for her mamma in his younger days.

The interview closed with a fatherly kiss, and May was left to digest the matter with which she had been so unexpectedly furnished. Lord Agramont was soon on his way back to London; and leaving him to enjoy his prospects, we will pay a visit to his wards.

It has been seen that during Helen's stay in France a new element had been infused into her life, and that a spirit naturally haughty had become childlike in its desire to obey the laws framed by the Father of heaven for the direction of His children. She recommenced her life at Croyland with a firm determination to continue the careful culture of heart and soul commenced under Dr. Milman's guidance, and her efforts had been exemplary so far as they went; but she felt that all she was doing was for herself alone.

Dr. Milman had spoken to her of the necessity of aggressiveness if she would be useful in Christian things, and she had not at present done anything that required effort. What should she do? Here was a difficulty. She could not move in any plan she might devise without Lord Agramont's concurrence, and he was so difficult of access and so full of business that there was nothing in his manner to invite her confidence. But not being deficient in reasoning power, after a few minutes' thought she put Dr. Milman's recommendation and her own difficulty side

by side, and came to the conclusion that the very perplexity she was experiencing was an instance of the necessity of aggressiveness, and determined, as a first step towards overcoming the impediment in her way, to seek an interview with her guardian, and to ask his permission to engage in any useful work that she might find to do. She had thought of visiting the poor in their cottages, of reading to the sick, of teaching the children; but she had never been beyond the abbey precincts except under the care of Miss Aberley, and did not feel at liberty to do so without his sanction.

On the first opportunity that presented itself, she knocked at his study door, and thought she received an invitation to enter, but instead, Lord Agramont (who happened at the time to be writing to Mrs. Bosanquet) had not even heard the knock, and supposing upon seeing her enter, that she did not know he was there, and had come for a book, he did not think it necessary to make any remark or even to turn his head.

His notice appeared to Helen to be intentionally withheld; and disinclined to demand a recognition, she quietly withdrew, concluding that, with his habit of abstraction and the multiplicity of his engagements, he would not like to be troubled with her little every-day affairs; that if she managed to secure a hearing, it would be from his habit of benevolence, not from any real interest in what she might have to say.

Dispirited and disappointed, her thoughts turned towards the rector, the generally recognized centre of any useful and religious movement; but he was the same of whom we heard Vero Drummond express his disapprobation long ago, and she felt that she would not meet with support in that quarter. She sat comparing the soulless, conventional measure in which the service was intoned in Croyland parish church, to the sym-

pathetic voice in which it was conducted by Dr. Milman, until her heart went out lovingly towards her old friend.

He had spoken to her of the probability of his having to make a journey to London shortly subsequent to her leaving France, and she sat down and wrote to him, hoping to induce him to make a *détour* and to pay them a visit at Croyland at the same time. In her letter, she briefly alluded to the difficulties in her way, unintentionally betraying something of the pique and disappointment she was experiencing at the time; and feeling pleasure in the thought that she had one friend to whom she could unburden herself, she undertook some athletic intellectual exercise, by way of driving all disappointing thoughts into oblivion.

That same day Lord Agramont went away again, and the girls were left to themselves, Mrs. Stuart and Sylvie taking good care of them at a respectful distance.

For many reasons, Helen very much enjoyed her return to the abbey. The beauty and solemnity of her childhood's home had always been consonant with her taste, and now a reverent and grateful perception of God in all the loveliness by which she was surrounded, elevated and enhanced her enjoyment of it. One day she was walking through the park, delighting in the harmony and pleasantness of earth, air, and sky, when she saw the postman making his way towards the house, and hastened to meet him, in the hope that he might be the bearer of a letter for her.

She was not disappointed, for not only was there a letter for her, but it was a very long one, and, judging by the avidity with which she read it, a very interesting one. It was from Dr. Milman; and those who share her interest in what the doctor had to say may look over her shoulder and follow her in its perusal:

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIEND,

I felt gratified by your remembrance of me which this morning's post brought to Paris, and welcomed your handwriting with much pleasure, from past recollections of your sojourn among us.

I was to have gone to London last week, and hope to pass through it soon after you receive this; but my stay will necessarily be so short that I am afraid to promise, or even to hint, anything about visiting Croyland at present. Rest assured, however, that, though my visit be delayed, it lies before me as a pleasurable anticipation.

I have proposed sending you a few lines, both on your own account and mine, but have delayed doing so from indisposition, more pressing duties, and forgetfulness, alternately. I wish to set before you plainly, in writing, what I consider to be your present position and responsibilities in the Church of Jesus Christ.

Here followed a closely written page of practical admonition as to the various duties incumbent on her as a professed Christian, and then one in which more particular allusion was made to a matter in which we have seen her to be deficient. This part of it we will read:

It now remains for me to say a few words in regard to self-discipline; for, judging from your letter, I fear it is a duty not sufficiently considered by you, or I should not have had a hint of a very important victory still unachieved. Think of the matter about which we talked together, and in which I thought you decidedly at fault, as a serious thing. Do not make light of it, but view it as it really is—a serious evil, a disadvantage to you in many ways, and, as your letter seems to say, a hindrance to you in Christian things.

Knowing what I do of your relations with Lord Agramont, I consider it your bounden duty entirely to set aside all that may be called by the multitude 'self-respect,' 'proper independence,' or whatever flattering term they may please to designate what the severity of truth obliges me to denominate by no more pleasant-sounding word than 'self-love;' and, suppressing self, frankly to convince him of your desire—nay, your anxiety—to be to him all an affectionate daughter would wish to be to a father she not only loved, but deeply and fervently respected.

To bring yourself into subjection to your will in this matter may possibly require a hard, very hard struggle; but, remember, we agreed that the Christian life is a warfare, and you calmly decided upon enlisting under Christ's banner, knowing that a soldier should be uncompromising in his obedience. I know that it is only in proportion as Christ's religion is developed in us that our character can be approximately perfect and self-suppressed; but, while I sympathize in the difficulty of the duty before you, I could not sympathize in the neglect of it. You should regard your duty to Lord Agramont as your duty to God. Make the difficulty a matter of special prayer; ask Him to assist you in your efforts, and the way will be made plain.

I am sure, my dear young friend, you know me well enough to understand both the spirit in which I make these observations and the object I have in view. I do not in the least mistrust your sincerity in your wish to do right, but I mistrust myself, as myself; I mistrust the hearts of all men in themselves; and if I be jealous over you with a godly jealousy, I trust the time may come when we shall rejoice that the effort was not made by you in vain.

Not forgetting my little favourite,

I am your sincere friend,

A. MILMAN.

As Helen read, her colour changed. The tone of the letter seemed to her a little dictatorial to a girl of eighteen, and the doctor had evidently misunderstood her. When she spoke of the difficulty of approach to Lord Agramont, she did not mean him to infer that she should not persevere in her plan. And then she read again, and, in a more discerning spirit, detected the kindly feeling that balanced what seemed to her rather an unfair ventilation of her feelings; and with increased love to her venerable friend, determined that his letter should serve the purpose for which it had been written.

Fortune favoured her resolve, for a few minutes after Lord Agramont's carriage came in sight, with himself as its only occupant, and going forward to welcome him, she said, brightly, as he was about to enter the house,

'Have you a few minutes to spare? We feel a little at a loss without Miss Aberley to direct us. I should be glad to speak to you for a few minutes.'

'I am quite at your service,' replied her guardian, pleasantly. 'Shall we take a turn, or would you prefer going in?'

Helen expressed a decided preference for a walk, and they strolled from the house together. For the first minute Helen felt reserve, but by degrees she confided to him her wish to do something in the world—to live, not to vegetate, and wound up by asking if she could not be of some use to him as his secretary, or amanuensis, or in any capacity he might think fit.

Linking his arm within hers, and looking no less gratified than surprised at so unexpected a revelation of herself, he said he could heartily sympathize in her wish to be actively useful, adding that, inasmuch as he was concerned in the wish, she could not have made him an offer of assistance at a more opportune time, and as to anything she might wish to set on foot, he would give it his prompt consideration.

There was a slightly nervous manner about him that Helen had never before observed, and he began a sentence and left it unfinished, as if he wished to say something, but hesitated; then, after looking observantly in her face, which at that time expressed the enjoyment she was experiencing in their free confidential converse, the realization of which had been her pent-up longing for years, he appeared to read in it an expression which suggested that his confidence would not be misplaced, for he went on to say that the first thing with which he should burden her would be a personal secret, and proceeded to put her in possession of his matrimonial prospects, accounting for his long bachelorhood by his inability to transfer his affection from his first love.

Expressing the interest she felt, which was such as might be expected from a girl of her age on hearing a tale of faithful love, Helen sympathetically relieved the emotion she detected by leading him on to talk of the arrangements and alterations to be made in the house, in preparation for his bride. She spoke in a sensible, matter-of-course way, and in appreciation of which he invited her to walk through the rooms with him.

Gladly assenting, she followed where he led, and by a remark and question here and there, learned what renovations he considered necessary. It was evident that he felt such an interest as only a youthful lover might be expected to feel in all arrangements for his bride's comfort. Sofas and chairs, which suited ladies of a former generation, were pronounced uneasy rests for those of a more luxurious age, and dark heavy draperies were to be exchanged for others of more delicate hues. The rooms in general use were to be fresh hung, and no expense was to be spared to make the grim old abbey look cheerful and habitable. He was interested in everything; but when his lady's *boudoir* came under discussion, his interest visibly increased. For that room he wished for a particular style of furniture, and an oriel window, and regretted his inability to supply the plan.

In her desire to be of use, Helen's reserve vanished, and she asked for a full explanation of his wishes.

Taking out his pencil, he made a few rough sketches illustrative of his design, which she, in the hope of supplying his deficiencies, appropriated to her use.

As they parted in the hall, he called out that she must take care he did not work her too hard, and rejoicing in the success of her effort, she went in search of her sister.

'You look so nice,' said Frances, seeing some beautifying influence had been at work. 'Has anything happened?'

Helen put her in possession of the news, bidding her not speak of the subject until she found it was generally known, and then set to work to plan furniture.

The task she had set herself would be a work of time, for Lord Agramont had made many novel suggestions, and she wished as far as possible to save him all trouble, and yet that his wish should be completely carried out. She was not only a clever artist, but she delighted in overcoming difficulties; so that her attempt met with complete success, and she had the great pleasure of laying a series of plans of which her judgment approved, before her guardian.

With a look of gratified appreciation, he pronounced them to be master-strokes — exactly what would be required; and folding them up with manifest satisfaction, said he should at once forward them to an upholsterer.

'I am anxious to hasten operations,' he said, detaining her as she was leaving the room. 'I fear troubles are at hand for our friends, and I want to have them under my care as soon as possible. That splendid young fellow has not been reported since the alarming account we saw in the papers; and Sir Lionel Shelley continues so great an invalid that there is a doubt as to his reaching England.'

Helen changed colour, and she asked herself why? She had only had an interview with Reginald Bosanquet of ten minutes' duration; all else she knew of him had been from hearsay: why should she, and why had she, felt an especial interest in him? It was difficult to determine the process by which it had been generated, but as she blushed deeper while she reasoned on the subject, she left the room deprecating her emotion as misplaced, while she found her efforts to suppress it entirely futile. After this she had full occupation, for Lord Agramont

consulted her taste and claimed her help in all his arrangements. She decided that many of the cottages on the estate should be altered, and embellished as much as possible; upon hearing which Helen proposed that Croyland should be converted into a model village in honour of his marriage, and volunteered to draw a plan of one according to her own notion. At once falling in with the suggestion, it was arranged that she should do so, and submit the drawings to Mrs. Bosanquet.

This was done, and the attention called forth such a very sweet and pretty letter from the future mistress of the abbey as to make Helen hopeful as to the future. She did not know what position she would be expected to take in the household; but was learning to be careful for nothing, but to endeavour to act well in every relation, and to leave the result with God.

Meanwhile, May was enjoying the preparations for a wedding, and obeying Lord Agramont's request by hastening matters as far as she was able. But Mrs. Bosanquet would not consent to fix a day for the marriage, until she had news of her son, and could communicate with him.

They had heard that Sir Lionel was too ill to return to England, and that William Bryant was kindly staying to nurse him; and, although May did remark on hearing it, that she had read of a serpent killing a lion, and that she did not think Sir Lionel would escape from William Bryant alive, she grew comparatively reconciled to her uncertain position, and looked forward with pleasure to a stay at the abbey.

At last a letter came from Reginald, stating that it was uncertain as to the time of his arrival in England, and begging that his mother would not allow his absence to interfere with any plans for her comfort; saying that he had heard of her engagement. It was written in a very illegible hand, and both Lord

Agramont and Mrs. Bosanquet felt anxious as to his health; but the former so pressed upon the lady the inutility of delaying their union, that the result was a summons to Helen and Frances to the Old Park House, in order that they might be present at the wedding. The ceremony was quite private; and as the writer sympathizes with quiet weddings generally, and quiet second marriages especially, she is not inclined to intrude upon their privacy.

CHAPTER XXIV.

'Thy thoughts and feelings shall not die,
Nor leave thee when grey hairs are nigh
A melancholy slave;
But an old age, serene and bright,
And lovely as a Lapland night,
Shall lead thee to thy grave.'

A PARTY of a somewhat incongruous character was assembled in the coffee-room of an hotel on Lake Windermere, for the house and all other houses of a similar description in the neighbourhood were full to overflowing, and travellers were glad to avail themselves of any resting-place, even though the accommodation offered was nothing more promising than is to be found in a public room.

It was an amusing study to watch the arrivals and to observe the various indications of satisfaction, or the reverse, as they seated themselves at the common board.

In the remotest corner of the room, at one of the smaller tables, sat a newly-married couple, as dainty and particular in their equipments as in their requirements. They had endeavoured to ensconce themselves securely against any chance of attack from the rude world, and appeared to be congratulating themselves on their success, when a stout unctuous-looking yeoman, with his son (a youthful counterpart of himself), seated

themselves as their *vis-à-vis*, and confronted them with provoking innocency.

Next we notice a middle-aged bachelor, whose restless, uneasy manner kept every one at the table on the look out as to what he was going to do next. He publicly announced his opinion that unmarried men should travel at midsummer, as in the autumn the mornings and evenings are apt to be chilly, adding that it might be that he was feeling the change from Spain, where he had been experiencing the sultriness that precedes the shock of an earthquake, which shock took place a few days before he left.

Judging from his convulsive movements, the thought naturally suggested itself that the shock had permanently affected his system, for his uncertain movements, which seemed, however, certain to bring him into collision with a gentle-looking widow lady, who tried in vain to avoid him, caused much such an excitement among his fellows as we may suppose an electrical eel would cause among the fishes.

Then came a young aristocrat, travelling with his tutor, who, in spite of his natural exclusiveness, was obliged quietly to submit to be jostled by the common herd.

But all were thrown into the shade by the appearance of a party of East Indians—a Maharajah and his suite—the former of whom looked very much disgusted at the want of accommodation, and with a people who did not think it incumbent on them to pay more respect to his highnessship. Resignedly enfolding his arms in his robe of embroidered camlet, he sat haughtily waiting attention, merely addressing a word now and then to his financier, who had a cunning cross eye, long beard, and unkempt hair surmounted by a fez cap, and who stood by his master's side, his knees in closer proximity than his heels.

With his hands buried deep in the pockets of his loose trousers, he stood jingling his money as if he liked its touch, until an imposing-looking vehicle drawing up to the door sent him shuffling away, and brought forward the proprietor of the hotel, who, to learn the rank of its occupants, cast a stealthy glance at the brass plates on the portmanteaus, and the equipage generally, and then, as if satisfied by the survey, invited the ladies to alight, with a promise that they should be shortly accommodated with rooms.

The carriage contained the Douglases and May, who were going home, and intended to see something of the lake district on their way. When they entered the room their appearance caused a general sensation, and 'Who are they?' was inquired on all sides.

Several aristocratic names were suggested, the owners of which were known to combine beauty with rank; and gentlemen, who had until then kept their places with the same sort of stolidity as a London business man will keep his seat in an omnibus, in spite of repeated invitations to 'oblige a lady,' now voluntarily rose to make room for them.

The Maharajah's little sharp black eyes performed extra duty, and when Sylvie made her appearance, his tongue was let loose, and he addressed a few words to her in her own language.

Suddenly a flash, followed by a report, sent everybody to the windows or doors to inquire its cause. It was at first supposed that that which they had heard was an indication of a coming storm; but it was not Heaven's artillery that had startled them —the explosion was from a gun. Report after report followed quickly, until the hills echoed a prolonged and continuous firing, joy-bells rang out a merry peal, and all was excitement and speculation.

Presently the news spread that the allies had entered Sebastopol!

'Here comes the coach!' cried out some one; upon which announcement there was a general rush and scramble for papers.

'Get me one if possible,' said Helen, addressing Gilbert, an old faithful servant, to whose care the girls had been intrusted.

Until now the Maharajah had seemed a fixture; but some leverage sufficient to move him had at last been applied, and he went and walked about outside the hotel, sharing in the general excitement. He had observed Helen's desire for a paper, and when Gilbert returned and said he had been unsuccessful, produced one, and presented it to her with elaborate courtesy.

'Only one minute,' she said, as she gratefully accepted the offer; and the three girls placed themselves in concerned attitudes, and stood glancing over the news.

'He's a lucky fellow, whoever he may be, to command such interest,' remarked the excitable bachelor, who by some cross way or short cut was always at hand. 'It is worth while wearing a red coat, if it be only to please the ladies.'

Sylvie overheard the remark, and others of a like kind, and became so excited at her young ladies having to stand there as gazing-stocks, that Gilbert had some difficulty in keeping her under proper control, so much inclined was she to call the bystanders to account for their observations.

Finding, upon inquiry, that there was no certainty of their getting beds in the house, and after remonstrating with the hotelkeeper for misleading them, Gilbert informed Helen of the fact, and suggested that the course most likely to meet with Lord Agramont's approval would be for them to return home by the

late train, to sleep at the terminus hotel, and proceed to Croyland early the next morning.

The news was very disappointing, for it had been with some difficulty May had obtained permission to pass through the lake district on their way home; but on Gilbert's respectful intimation that he believed it was what his master would prefer them to do, they reluctantly yielded.

The next view we will take of them shall be at Croyland, busy, and interested that the abbey should present its pleasantest aspect on the home-coming of its mistress.

Helen is the responsible head, and is anxious lest the preparations should not be completed in time. An oriel was being made in Lady Agramont's *boudoir* (a real old-fashioned oriel, in the thickness of the wall), and the men had not made as much progress, in her absence, as she expected they would have done.

A letter comes, announcing the return of the travellers sooner than was anticipated, so that in her anxiety she takes upon herself to speak to the workmen, the result of which appeal is a visible pressing on of the business. But notwithstanding her influence, the masons did not complete the room until two days before the expected arrival, and upholsterers had still their work to do. A great deal can be effected in a short time, when a number of experienced hands are employed, and in spite of her fears she had the satisfaction of seeing the arrangements intrusted to her fully completed.

She was watching the furniture of her own designing, placed in a way she thought most appropriate, and thinking that it looked unique enough to satisfy even Lord Agramont, when May entered the room.

> "'In her oryall there she'll be,
> Closyd well with royal glas,"

The welcome home.—P. 329.

she said, merrily. 'I am looking out for the finishing touches. All our preparations have been very prosaic at present. The flowers in the hall look very well. I vote that there shall be a blazing fire there, and that when the people at the lodge hear the sound of the carriage wheels, they ring a bell as a sign for the front door to be opened, so that the fire may serve as a welcome and a guiding star, directly they enter the park. We should distinguish ourselves in some way. You must take precedence in the reception, and play queen or empress, and Fan and I will be ladies in waiting. As to our dresses, I can't devise anything quite as original as that I suggested to that queer girl at St. Jullien's,' she added, laughing at the remembrance; 'but we must look as imposing as possible. I have heard that the ringers are determined to give us a tremendous peal. I don't know whether I like that part of it: it depends very much on the mood of those they wish to gratify.'

'As the mind is pitched the ear is pleased,' quoted Frances. 'I dare say we shall be invited to dine with Lord and Lady Agramont the first evening,' she added, meekly.

'And the second, too, I should think,' returned May, drawing herself up. 'Why, our grandmothers were married at my age.'

Now, as in the sixteenth century, when Will Shakespeare took cognizance of the course of things, 'Time and the hour runs through the longest day,' and in due time Lord and Lady Agramont received their welcome, according to the order prescribed. May, in her eagerness to reach the hall in time, tore a long rent in her dress, and untied the fillet that confined her hair; but as she looped the rent over her arm, it only made her look a little more fantastical; and when, with her streamer floating on the wind, she sprang gaily forward, and threw her

arms round her mamma's neck, it was not difficult to conceive how she obtained the name of 'Fairy.'

Her easy, disembarrassed manner reminded Helen of the difference in their positions; and for one moment the sensitive reserve that had always been her bane in her relations with Lord Agramont restrained her to hold back; but the next, with a sweet look of approach, she went forward to greet Lord Agramont's bride.

He appeared satisfied, for playfully twisting May's fillet round all three of the girls, he asked which of them he was to embrace first, then gave the preference to Helen.

It was a pleasant home party that met round the dinner-table that evening: Lord Agramont looked light-hearted and happy, the girls affectionate and pleased, and Lady Agramont just as a lady should look under the circumstances.

The next morning Helen rose earlier than usual, as if some extra preparation would be necessary to enable her to meet the new state of circumstances in which she was placed, and after fortifying herself by communion with the Supreme disposer of events, under whose conduct she could put herself with full confidence, she felt prepared for whatever might happen; and, in happy spirits, made her way down to the breakfast-room. There she was met by such a look of kindness from Lord Agramont as almost balanced all former heartaches. Her manner to Lady Agramont was so exactly what was most acceptable, that that lady, after making fully appreciative comments on the beauty of the appointments of her room, and the kind consideration that had prompted many of its arrangements, invited her confidence as to the state of affairs at the abbey and in the neighbourhood, and became pleasantly communicative.

After breakfast they took a turn in the grounds, and when

Lady Agramont was about to part with her, she said, affectionately,

'I hope and believe we shall be useful to each other.'

A sort of spiritual magnetism had conveyed to each the fact that a bond already existed between them, which formed a good guarantee for a future friendship.

The abbey was now the home of all those in whom we have been especially interested, and was a rare specimen of a well ordered English household.

While appearing to leave the girls as free a little community as they had been before she became mistress, Lady Agramont exercised an imperceptible influence over them, not only regulating their studies and occupations, but improving their taste for such things as would make them useful and serviceable in their generation;—led them, in fact, to live a higher life, and to cultivate such graces as would avail them in another world.

Helen felt the relation to her to be rather sisterly than maternal, but without feeling her liberty to be in any way assailed, gladly put herself under her control and guidance, yielding her a confidence she had never given to any one else. Lord Agramont was very much gratified that so pleasant an understanding existed between them, and lovingly compared his wife, who seemed as young as ever in spirit, to a tree that grows in the highlands of Africa, the young leaves of which have the tints of our autumn foliage, but turn light green in more advanced age.

A very pleasant state of circumstances existed at the abbey; but whenever was there a summer without a cloud?

One morning when the girls were sitting happily in their own room, the appearance of Lady Agramont wearing a troubled expression on her face caused an inquiring movement. Her

regard fell especially on May, who by some instinct rose, and inquired,

'Is it anything about Sir Lionel?'

Lady Agramont hesitated, then with the tardy utterance that one naturally adopts in conveying bad news, said,

'I have had a letter from his lawyer. You know he has been helpless for some time—and you will be very much grieved—'

'He isn't dead?' asked May, in a deprecating voice.

Lady Agramont drew her towards her, and by her silence convinced her that her fears were well founded.

'I ought to have gone to him,' sobbed May. 'I know you would not have prevented me if I had very much wished it. He would have liked to have seen me: he said he loved me better than any one in the world!' And a stifling of the voice prevented her saying any more.

'I cannot recognize any ground you have for self-reproach, my love,' said Lady Agramont, tenderly. 'Lord Agramont and myself would have been very unwilling to see you start on such an errand. You could not have gone with even a show of prudence. Do not let that belief add to your grief.'

May looked up as if to take the comfort offered.

'We are not left without consolation,' pursued Lady Agramont. 'This is a very satisfactory account from his servant. It seems that he did not suffer any pain, and that he was calm, and conscious to the end.'

The detail was too much for May's composure, and she took the letter, and left the room to peruse it.

Later in the day she informed her mamma that she should like to go to Scotswood—that she thought she should feel better after she had talked with some one who had known Sir Lionel; and as it was decided, between those in authority, that it would

not be well to deter her in her inclination, she was shortly on her way to her old home, with only a groom for her attendant. Lady Agramont had expressed a wish to accompany her; but it had been her wish to go alone on Daylight. Since her return from France, she had been often prompted to set off upon a similar errand, but Helen's dissuasion, and her own dread of the void she would feel at her aunt's absence, had prevented her replying to it. From week to week she had expected Sir Lionel's return; then she had thought she would have him to greet her, and the house would not seem so very desolate. Now this hope had departed, she felt it would be a melancholy pleasure to visit familiar spots about the house and grounds, and indulge in sad memories of those who had there been her companions.

While riding through the town, she saw Dr. Coleridge in the distance. It was evident he saw her, and as evident that he would rather not recognize her. But on her stopping her mare, he came up and condoled with her on the loss she had sustained. Tears and sobs so choked her utterance, that she was quite unable to command her voice to put questions she would have liked to have had answered, so she quickly turned her horse's head to proceed on her way.

'Don't go to the Warren to-day,' said the doctor, kindly. 'Take my advice, and wait a little.'

Supposing that he felt her errand to be so melancholy an one that it would be too hard for her to bear, she rode on, without giving him time for further remonstrance.

As she drew near the Warren, every bush in the hedgerows, every piece of rock that crept out of the soil, appeared like an old friend, and it was hard indeed to realize the fact that those who had so often met her there, with looks of love and welcome,

would await her there no more. As the dire reality forced itself upon her, grief became so excessive that she could hardly sit her mare, and she waited at the lodge gate to recover herself before asking admission. Bettie Froggatt did not open to her this time, and a fresh thrill of anxiety passed through her mind on her account; but on Mrs. Burton opening the gate, and in answer to her inquiry after her mother, saying that, except that she was bedridden, she was as well as ever, May dismounted and went into the cottage.

The sight of the old dame, surrounded by various little comforts she had been in the habit of noticing as peculiar to her when she was a child, brought old times vividly to her remembrance, and she stood still, in deep thought, waiting for Bettie's recognition.

'Do I see the young lady? To be sure,' said the old woman, with difficulty turning her head. 'I know'd it wasn't a word of it true.'

May put out her hand, and supposing she referred to Sir Lionel's death, said kindly that she was afraid it was true.

'No, Missy, it can't be,' returned the old woman: 'he never meant this place to go to any one else, he as good as told me so, over and over again.'

May looked perplexed, and turned to Mrs. Burton for an explanation.

'Why, Miss, her means that they say—but no one believes it—that Sir Lionel has willed the place away from you, and that a good part of the property is to go to a hospital, or some such thing; and yesterday, when the lawyers came, and locked up and set their seal on everything in the house, and gave the servants notice to quit, I thought there must be something doing as shouldn't be. They wanted to pay off the servants then

and there; but men and women, one and all, said they weren't going to budge until they have orders from proper quarters, and so they're there yet.'

This was strange news to May, but as she had no remark to make on it, and old Bettie broke out into a low whimper that fell discordantly on her ear, she said that she would go up to the house at once.

The grounds and gardens were still preserved in their usual perfect order, and it was not until she reached the house that she could appreciate the entireness of the change that had taken place since she was last there; but that was closely shut up, and there was not even a servant in sight.

When she knocked, bars and bolts had to be withdrawn before she could be admitted, and on seeing her, a footman, who opened the door, appeared confused, and met her with a look between astonishment and doubt.

She walked into the hall, and asked for Mrs. Evans, then tried to open the drawing-room door.

But the handle would not turn, and the man, looking distressed, said that there was not a room in the house open—that every place was locked except the servants' offices. While he went in search of the housekeeper, May waited in the hall thinking over the strange novelty of her position, until to her joy she saw Argus strolling lazily by. He gave one look at her, and then began to show evident marks of excitement.

Fairly overcome at the sight of this one friend, she sat down on a chair to caress him, and as he turned round and round with delight at seeing her, her tears fell fast over his shaggy coat.

When Mrs. Evans appeared, she confirmed the statement made at the lodge, and asked May for directions as to how they should act.

She was so demonstrative in her regret (pitying May for the death of Sir Lionel, and herself for the prospect of being again thrown on the world) as to be entirely out of harmony with May's mood: she told her that she should hear from some one shortly, and calling to Argus, who willingly followed her, left the house.

The footman waited at hand to open the door, and as he did so said, by way of sympathy,

'You wouldn't believe, Miss, how that dog did fret at first; he was found lying on your bed, and when he was punished for that, he lay down on the mat outside the room. There was a golosh in the hall, and he wasn't satisfied unless he could put his head upon it. Anything that belonged to you would please him, no matter what. For a long time he was quite off his feed, and to this day he's noways himself.'

May could only smile good-naturedly, her heart was too full to speak.

Outside the lodge gate she found her mamma and Lord Agramont awaiting her. Not feeling happy at the thought of her making the return journey alone, they had followed in the carriage.

Fairly spent, May was by no means unwilling to exchange her seat on Daylight for one that required less of her attention, and it was, besides, a relief to communicate her news to some one she knew to be interested, so that she left Daylight to be led home, and was soon in comfortable keeping, unburdening her mind of all she had to tell.

'I shall not be surprised at some legal difficulties arising,' said Lord Agramont, thoughtfully. 'Poor Shelley was not a business man.'

Inquiries were at once instituted, and it was ascertained that,

with the exception of a few thousand pounds left to May, Sir Lionel's property was divided between William Bryant and various charities, all of which were under control of Roman Catholics. Convinced that it was not a fair will, Lord Agramont determined that the Warren should not pass from May without a contest, and at once put the affair into his lawyer's hands, and recommended that the subject should not be one for family discussion.

May did not regard her pecuniary loss, but she could not understand not being allowed to go home and secure her own personal treasures — things in which she thought no one else could have any right; and she had a strong feeling of dissatisfaction at the success that had attended William Bryant's scheming; but as there was nothing at Croyland to remind her of her loss or encourage grief, she gradually recovered her mirthful spirits.

CHAPTER XXV.

'Trifles, light as air,
Are to the jealous confirmation strong
As proofs of Holy Writ.'

SUCH capital fun!' exclaimed May, entering the room in which her mamma was sitting. 'You must know, Helen trusted herself to my charioteership on her way to one of the cottages, and that when we arrived at our destination we both jumped out of the carriage, and left Clary to wait our pleasure. Very soon we heard a loud hallooing, and going out to see what was the matter, found she had disappeared! What pranks do you think the saucy little creature had been up to? Attracted, we suppose, by a savoury smell, she had walked in at an open gate to the place where the haymakers were cooking their dinners, and her first exploit was to upset a huge pot of potatoes, and, after exposing them to the cooling breezes, to swallow them; Helen thinks the men said pot and all—but let that pass. Pudding followed, in orthodox fashion; of these she swallowed six (each tied up in a cloth), and, for dessert, took a straw hat off the head of a sleeping man. What's to be done?' she asked, merrily. 'It is not fair the men should lose their dinner. I told them to follow us, and there's such a tribe of them waiting! That kind Robert

Lee advised that they should not come up to the house; but I thought we should find a way of satisfying them. I didn't know there would be so many.' As she turned to go with Lady Agramont from the room, she saw Vero Drummond standing in the hall.

She greeted him with frank pleasure. He confessed to have overheard the explanation of the crowd outside, and at once offered his help in dispersing it.

May introduced her mamma, who, upon hearing his name, looked much interested, and after giving him a warm welcome, eagerly inquired when he had last seen her son.

Vero replied that he had left him in hospital at Balaklava a month since; that although sounder than it was once supposed he ever could be, he was requiring good nursing; and that he should be glad to see him in England again.

Lady Agramont's expression was anxious, and for a moment she seemed preoccupied with her own thoughts; but the hum of voices outside reminding her that there were others besides herself who had cause for anxiety, she said, absently,

'I suppose the tables had better be laid in the servants' hall. I imagine they will have to be content with a cold collation.'

'Allow me to undertake for you,' said Vero, gallantly.

And Lady Agramont gratefully accepting the offer, he at once went to confront the shy-looking community collected outside the house.

'Is it on the subject of potatoes you've come?' he asked, addressing them in a loquacious rattling style peculiar to himself. 'I've just come from the Crimea, so that it won't take much to convince you that I know the difference in value between a potato cooked and a potato raw, or the discomfort of being done out of a meal when one's hungry. The bad part

of this business is, that there are neither cooked potatoes nor hot plum-puddings to be had here; but if you'll each take a flagon to the top of the cellar stairs, it shall be filled for you with good home-brewed, and on the table in the servants' hall you will presently find something to satisfy your hunger.'

One of the men, of a musical turn, set up a shout for the 'red, white, and blue,' which shout was echoed enthusiastically by the others, until Vero was glad to put an end to their plaudits by showing them the way to their dinner.

Nothing loth to follow as directed, they were soon seated before some substantial-looking joints of cold meat, and Vero cheered the feast with a joke and a toast to England's stout-hearted labourers, congratulating the man whose nose was nearly coming off with his hat on his escape, and expressing a hope that Clary's digestion would not suffer from the pots and the pudding-cloths she was reported to have swallowed.

This pleasantry caused general good humour, and called forth another hurrah for the 'red, white, and blue,' which made the hall resound again, for each seemed to try to exceed his fellows in noise.

'Honest men and bonnie lasses!' returned Vero, acting as toastmaster.

And then he left the room, amidst a *furore* of admiration for the fine-mannered young soldier.

He had only just joined the ladies, when a carriage drove up to the door, containing Mrs. Drummond and her little twin daughters, Constance and Isabel, and he went to hand his mother in.

'I did not intend you to elude me this first day,' she said, merrily, her face beaming with happiness. 'I reserved a place in the carriage, but found you had flown.'

And telling the children to stay where they were, she leant proudly on her son's arm, and went into the house.

'Will not the children come in?' asked Lady Agramont, meeting them at the door with friendly cordiality.

May did not wait for an answer, but soon stood on the carriage steps, and invited the little girls to alight.

At the first sound of an invitation, Bel was for springing out, but Con restrained her by saying that mamma said it might be troublesome, as Lady Agramont was not a friend of long standing.

'She didn't know we should be pressed,' returned Bel. 'The other day she told us we might have gone in if we were very much pressed. How silly you are, Con!'

Vero saw the difficulty, and went out to settle it, by jumping them out of the carriage, and complaining that they were keeping Miss Shelley standing in the sun.

They were interesting little things, great pets with Vero, and he took one under each arm and introduced them as his pocket edition, in two volumes. So much were they alike as to need some mark to distinguish them, and bracelets of different gems were used for the purpose.

Frances was very fond of children, and she no sooner got them into her possession than she ran away with them to the place where her old toys were kept, to try to find something to amuse them.

This brought to May's mind the memory of her childhood's home, with its multiplied treasures in which children would delight, and she became so abstracted that Vero had no alternative but to bestow his attentions on Helen.

Meanwhile the two elder ladies were enjoying an animated talk on a subject in which mothers are apt to indulge—viz.,

their sons; and as Mrs. Drummond rose to leave the room, she said, in a voice audible to all present,

'I did hope you would have made an exception in this one case, my girls have so set their hearts on having yours to share with them in the festivities they have planned in honour of their brother's return.'

'I hope soon to be more sociable,' returned Lady Agramont, apologetically.

Helen observed the action and reaction on Vero's expression as the request was made and the answer returned, and that a glance at him urged his mother further to press her suit.

'Will the young people join us?' urged Mrs. Drummond. 'The girls will be sadly disappointed if I am entirely unsuccessful.'

'To say nothing of the boys,' interposed Vero, with a winning look at Lady Agramont.

This reminded her that Vero had a just claim on her interest, and she at once replied that she thought she might accept for them, and that if Lord Agramont could spare the time, she too should be inclined to rescind her decision.

A grateful look from Vero signed the agreement, and it was being settled that on the day appointed the family from the abbey was to go on a visit to the hall, when May said in an aside to her mamma, that she should not like to miss Vincent; then remembering that it would be possible for Vincent to follow her to the hall, added,

'I do not care for gaiety just now; it will not be necessary for me to go.'

'We shall not like to leave you alone,' said her mother, thoughtfully; 'but I do not feel it will be kind to Captain Drummond for us all to absent ourselves, as it is evidently his

wish that we should be present.' And not thinking it necessary to convey May's decision to her friends, she cordially took her leave of them.

'It is strange that Sir Lionel Shelley should have changed his mind as to leaving his fortune to that dear girl,' remarked Mrs. Drummond on her way home. 'The report is that a great part of his wealth is bequeathed to charities.'

Vero looked surprised—his mother thought, pleased; but as the twins were very wide awake and had very sharp ears, so that nothing that was said was likely to escape them, the subject was dropped, and Vero amused them with anecdotes of camp life, indulging in a little affectionate exaggeration when the virtues of his friend Bosanquet were under discussion.

In due time the party arrived at Lawton Hall, but without May. Lady Agramont respected her feeling in the matter too much to urge her to accompany them against her will; and while she decided that her own visit must be very short in consequence, she hoped to compensate for its brevity by manifesting (what she really felt) a warm interest in the family at the hall.

Mr. Drummond's family was a large one, but was so controlled that the younger members of it were not allowed to interfere with the pursuits of the elder, so that there was none of the inconvenient clashing observable in some large families; the result of which was, that it was a pleasure to the elder ones to be allowed to bring the younger children from the nursery. After a short conversation with Mr. Drummond and his eldest daughter—the former a quiet, delicate, studious man, who left everything to his wife's management, and regarded her as the chiefest and best among women—Lady Agramont asked to see the children, and Vero and Gertrude were immediately on the

alert; the former remarking that he was sure Freddy must be tired of playing at soldiers, and ready for anything for a change. His voice was soon echoing through the passages leading to the nursery, at the sound of which the children jostled each other in their anxiety to get at him, and were so uproarious in their delight, that he was obliged to caution them they must either behave themselves rationally, or stay where they were, before he could bring them to order. Bel, in her eagerness, upset a whole suite of drawing-room furniture, consisting of many dozen pieces, that Con was carefully arranging, and which had been cut out for her by Nora and Edith during the time between morning and afternoon study.

The little girl coloured with vexation, and Vero, whose fine manly character had been softened by his mother's influence, at once prepared to remedy the disaster, and stooping to help the little girl to collect her treasures, said, sympathetically,

'I suppose these have taken you and Bel all the afternoon to arrange?'

'Only me,' said Con. 'Bel has been playing with Freddy: she only came in just now.'

'I made him cross, and he has been cutting off the lily heads, pretending they were my head, and digging a hole to bury them, saying that that 's how he should like to serve me,' laughed Bel.

'Isn't he silly?' chimed in Con.

Mr. Freddy's ruthless and summary mode of punishment seemed to tickle the fancy of all present, and there was a sort of laughing chorus on the way to the drawing-room. There the children felt the necessity of being on their best behaviour, and after doing the usual duty, quietly formed themselves into a group in a corner, and amused themselves with some toys that

were reserved especially for drawing-room use; while Vero laid himself out for the amusement of the visitors.

But Bel was always daring, and after they had been seated some minutes she ventured across the room, to ask her brother where the pretty one was, with large blue eyes, that looked as if they were laughing.

Vero's heart echoed 'where?' but the announcement of an arrival did away with the necessity for an answer.

'Bad Bel! bouncing Bel! bonnie Bel!' said the relenting Master Freddy, as she returned to her corner, exulting in her *escapade.*

'This is a great-aunt and uncle of ours,' said Vero, addressing Helen. 'We receive them at some sacrifice of personal comfort, and I am afraid we may have to ask your forbearance on their account.'

At the same minute the door opened, and an uncertain step and the stamp, stamp! of a trusty stick was heard in the hall, followed by the appearance of a very old gentleman, who was announced as Admiral Wyninto.

'Didn't bargain for this,' he said, gruffly, as he surveyed the assembled company. 'Can't you give me a cabin somewhere?'

Vero went to welcome and to pacify him.

Mrs. Drummond was engaged with Aunt Jane, whose thin voice was distinctly heard giving minute directions as to the accommodation of her various pets, but on overhearing the admiral's question, she came quickly forward, and explained to him that he saw only quite a friendly party; but as the old gentleman persisted in saying that after travelling eighty miles with a gouty foot, even a friendly party was not to his taste, Mrs. Drummond did not thwart his inclination, and the blue coat, gilt buttons, and drab small clothes jerked themselves out

of the room. No more was seen or heard of either of the old couple for that evening.

'Who comes here?' said the admiral the next morning, as he stood at the window of the breakfast-room, with his canary on his head. 'She's as taut and tight a little frigate as you'll meet in a year's sail,' he added, musingly.

Vero looked up, and seeing May jumping off her horse, went out to meet her.

'Here is a telegram,' she said, excitedly. 'It is likely to give news of Reginald. Will you take me to mamma?'

She spoke to him as to a recognized friend of her brother's, and, gratified by the implied confidence, he accompanied her at once to the apartments occupied by that lady. Upon seeing who were her visitors, Lady Agramont looked surprised; but Vero, who was almost as much interested in the news as any one present, lingered, and the exclamation, 'It is from Portsmouth: I have to meet him in London!' put him in possession of what he wanted to know. The words only conveyed to May the prospect of soon seeing her brother again; but Vero saw Lady Agramont look anxious, and shared her fears as to the nature of the meeting. He asked if he could do anything to facilitate her journey, and addressing himself to May, said,

'Cannot we persuade you to stay with us?'

'Do, my darling,' urged her mother; 'I shall not be happy to leave you alone, and it is uncertain how long we may be detained in London.'

To tell truth, May had found her one evening alone somewhat oppressive, but some little pressing was necessary to induce her to alter her determination, and Vero left the room, saying he should send his mother to try to achieve her capture.

May was by no means unwilling to yield herself into Mrs.

Drummond's custody, and it was decided that after accompanying her mamma to the abbey, she should return to the hall, so that in the evening of that day she was with her friends again.

There was a sparkle about her that very much added to the merriment of any party, and a joyous group, with her at their head, was assembled the next morning in the drawing-room at the hall, when the admiral and his sister took it into their heads to honour the young people with their presence. Owing to wounds received in battle, the admiral's limbs were by no means sound, neither were they entirely under his control, therefore he could not calculate on the exact spot at which his next step might land him. In order to seat himself, a gyratory movement was necessary, which, by the aid of two sticks, rolled him into his chair, as a lever turns over a log. After the sticks had served their purpose, it was important to be rid of them as quickly as possible; so that, as he wheeled into his place, he threw them down with great force, causing a startling noise. His movements were altogether somewhat mysterious to the uninitiated, and May, supposing the fall to be the result of accident, ran forward in haste to help him.

'Let them alone, let them alone!' was the quick exclamation. And Vero, considerably annoyed at the *brusquerie*, and sensibly alive as to who was the subject of it, whispered apologetically,

'He has been considerably knocked about the world, and is a martyr to gout. That is to be accepted as an excuse for bearishness generally, and this specimen of it in particular.'

'Perhaps he 's a honey bear?' returned May, quickly.

'We know if he 's a bear at all, he 's a sea bear and I hear that upon acquaintance they are found to be most affectionate, lovable creatures.'

'She doesn't want an excuse for a gouty old fellow like me,'

interrupted the admiral, who had overheard the first part of her speech, thereby giving unmistakable evidence that, however physically deficient he might be in other respects, his hearing was not at fault. 'I heard that young pickle, Freddy, I think you call him, say, that I must have come from Puffen Island; and there are no bears there. At all events, I won't bite you,' he added, looking good-naturedly at May, who was colouring vividly, but showing she was not afraid of him by helping him with his arrangements for the comfort of his canary, while Aunt Jane was disposing of her special pets, which consisted of a King Charles, and Goppo, a Lilliputian monkey. The latter was a curious little brute, with peering black eyes that seemed to take note of everybody and everything that was going on in the room; an expression as disagreeable in man as in beast: and perhaps May looked as if she didn't quite like it, for Aunt Jane remarked, reassuringly,

'It will be quite an amusement for you to watch Goppo—his intelligence is almost human. He isn't looking his best this morning—he's never comfortable till he's washed and combed. You shall bring me his things at once, Hart,' she said, calling to her maid.

The 'things' were brought, and the lady proceeded to wash the creature with minute care; after which she parted its hair straight down the middle of its forehead, and brushed it well into its place; then kissing its ugly nose with disgusting satisfaction, set it free.

'What an insane infatuation!' thought Vero; and the proceeding being by no means to May's taste, she was moving away, but was stopped by Aunt Jane's inquiry,

'You are fond of animals, I think?'

'Some—dogs and horses, very,' replied May.

'Poor dear little Dorg,' said the lady, fondling her spaniel. 'She was nearly keeping me at home. I have had to physic and poultice her for the last month; a precious pet.'

'She looks quite well now,' said May, shortly.

'Her complaint yielded to treatment at last,' said the lady. 'She was as sensible as if she knew the means used were for her good; but her intelligence is nothing to Goppo's.'

Goppo evidently liked to be noticed, and commenced a series of grotesque tricks, which made May inclined to look another way. But the beast was not to be so avoided, and he turned as she turned; until, finding he could not attract her admiration, he sat and fixed his eyes upon her with so disagreeable an expression, watching her so narrowly, that she was constrained to get out of his way by going to the other end of the room.

'I cannot endure monkeys,' she said, shrinking with a gesture of disgust. And she went to employ herself in the window at which her friends were sitting, whither Goppo followed her with incredible rapidity. Happening to look up, she saw him suspended to the overhanging curtain fringe, just above her head, his little mocking eyes watching her, as if he were determined to hit upon some plan to make her notice him.

After uttering an exclamation of surprise and disgust, she stood contemplating Helen's sketch, when, as if to punish her for her ill-disguised dislike, the revengeful little brute dropped directly down upon her head, and planted his nails in her neck.

Incensed at what struck him as a gross breach of hospitality, Vero's blood rose to boiling-point, and seizing the beast, he flung it into its cage with considerable force; and observing Mays' desperate attempt to look unconcerned, while she was pale with fright, he said angrily, 'There is such a thing as making

oneself too much at home,' and eagerly begged her pardon for allowing her to be subjected to such an annoyance.

Miss Wyninto's indignation at seeing her pet treated thus cavalierly was little less than her nephew's at May's annoyance, and she murmured something about his having been well practised in the art of cruelty of late. Vero argued that cruelty and self-defence were two very different things, and called her attention to the marks of the beast's claws on May's throat, adding decidedly,

'If he wants exercise, he must take it elsewhere.'

Fortunately, the sound of the luncheon bell caused a diversion, and Vero handed May into the dining-room, and made her his chief concern during the meal. She saw he was annoyed at what he called their inhospitable treatment of her, and in order to do away with the feeling, exerted herself to appear as lively and as little injured as possible, although really suffering from the effect of the shock.

That evening Mrs. Drummond lent her drawing-room for a religious meeting; for, as we have before seen, the rector was by no means an active agent in the parish, his energies being limited exclusively to his Sunday duties.

Helen had never been present at anything of the kind, and it was with much interest she anticipated seeing what she supposed would be the *crême de la crême* of religious society, met together for the furtherance of one common object, having for its aim the glory of God. But as the people assembled, she was struck by the shyness and uneasiness of their manner. They sat like uncomfortable dummies, as if each seemed afraid to claim recognition of the other, and she was relieved when their hostess entered the room. At the sight of her there was a general brightening; and as she passed from one to another

with as much self-abandonment as self-possession, doing her best to make all feel at ease, Helen appreciated the power of a benign influence. Though a woman of excellent judgment, Mrs. Drummond did not think it expedient or right to surround herself with a *chevaux de frise* of formality, in order to ward off the encroachments of those below her in position; she trusted to her natural dignity of manner to prevent the proffer of undue familiarity in any case in which presumption or ignorance might have attempted to trespass upon her graciousness, and her manner was genuinely and unaffectedly kind—free from coolness or patronage. While she was going the round of the room, Vero, who was a manly counterpart of herself, stood a calm looker on; and as he not only observed Margaret Lee's recognition repudiated by one with whom he knew her to be on intimate speaking terms, but also noticed what he thought to be a want of truthfulness in the manner of many present, he too hastily came to the conclusion, that he had not seen an uglier display of worldliness even in what is called worldly society, and that, in principle, the image which Nebuchadnezzar set up was not excluded from a religious gathering. As his mother passed him he said, with perhaps more feeling than reflection,

'I am sorry you consented to have the meeting here. If people think it necessary to practise conventional deceit, and to assume all this unmeaning formalism, let them choose another place. Don't let your drawing-room be the nursery of malice and uncharitableness. There always has been and always will be a subdivision of classes, inequalities of position, and differences of association, to prevent free intercourse even among Christians. No meetings of this kind will produce equality. It is a mistake — purely ideal — to suppose it can be done. Even those who call themselves friends have not the inde-

pendence to appear friendly with each other when in the presence of those higher in position than themselves. In a public room there is less temptation to be insincere.'

Mrs. Drummond merely remarked that allowances must be made for imperfections of character, and proposed the commencement of proceedings.

All were relieved when the first speaker rose to address the meeting; and although to those who were not of a business turn of mind the pecuniary details were slow—'Very slow indeed,' as the admiral whispered to May—yet they served to take people's thoughts from themselves. The *coup de grâce* was when Robert Lee stood up and brought his own experience to bear on what had been said. There was a simple truthfulness in his testimony, and as he repeated one anecdote after another, making people laugh heartily, May manifested her appreciation of the part he was taking in the entertainment; and when he had finished, she remarked with warm-hearted exultation, 'What he said was worth all the rest put together.'

The visitors adjourned to the unrobing-room, and Vero went over to his uncle. In doing so he crossed Robert Lee, who ran against him and trod on his foot. Robert's apology, though such as might be expected from one young man to another who had been friends from boyhood, should have been sufficient to satisfy any reasonable claim to respect, and was surprised and excited at the implacable manner in which his expression of concern was received. He stood for a moment as if inquiring an explanation of a manner so unnatural, and then receiving a more genial assurance that the hurt was only in his own imagination, walked on. May met him, and in her natural way made some allusion to the meeting.

'Fine top-lights those,' said the admiral to Vero, in allusion

to her bright eyes, which were then looking unusually bright. 'A gallant little craft that altogether—neat in her fittings,' he added, admiringly. 'I 'm only now beginning to understand what Marion'—(Mrs. Drummond was Marion to h im)—'meant by a family party. Is she the one, eh? You red-coats are lucky fellows, and I dare say you think you may have it all your own way; but take care, young man, take care!'

Vero wished the old man anywhere but where he was, and merely saying that he must be under some misapprehension, left him to take care of himself while he went to arrange for the entertainment of the girls in another room.

Mrs. Drummond asked them to sing, and May suggesting to Helen that the admiral would like something about the sea, they sang together some pretty lines that Helen had set to music. They were from L. E. L.'s song, 'The Coquette,' and ran as follows:

'She danced upon the waters,
Beneath the morning sun;
Of all old Ocean's daughters
The very fairest one.

'A golden zone compressed her
Round her white and slender side,
For her gallant crew had dressed her
Like a beauty and a bride.

'She wore her trappings gaily,
As a lady ought to do;
And the waves, who kissed her daily,
Proud of their mistress grew.

'They clung like lovers round her,
They danced beneath her feet;
With white foam-wreaths they bound her,
To grace her and to greet.

'She cut the blue waves, scorning
Our dull and common land;
To the rosy air of morning
He saw her sails expand.

'A shower of spray before her,
A silvery wake behind,
A cloud of canvas o'er her,
She sprang before the wind.

'She was so loved, the fairy,
Like a little merry child;
She was so light and airy,
So buoyant and so wild.

'And though so young a rover,
She knew what life could be,
For she had travelled over
Full many a stormy sea.'

The admiral was enchanted. He said that it was a great thing to hear the words distinctly, and that their singing was just what he liked. He considered the song chosen in compliment to himself, and as May left the room—for there was something in the last verses that brought Scotswood to her mind, and her heart was full—he stentoriously encored her.

CHAPTER XXVI.

'I see the jewel best enamellèd
Will lose his beauty; and though gold bides still
That others touch, yet often touching will
Wear gold; and so no man that hath a name
But falsehood and corruption doth it shame.'

DO wait one minute. Please do!' cried Bel, as May put her head in at the nursery the next morning on her way down to breakfast.

May did as she was requested, and Bel led her up to the window, to get out of hearing of Freddy, whom she evidently deemed unworthy of confidence.

For a minute the child's power of expressing herself seemed suspended from excitement; but soon recovering herself, she said,

'I know you won't tell. It is a great secret—it must not be anything in the least common, only we don't know a bit what.'

This delivery of herself not going far towards enlightening May as to the nature of the would-be request, she asked her to be more explicit; upon which Bel explained that they wanted to prepare some great surprise for brother Vero's birthday, and they thought she would tell them what.

'Is it to be an ovation setting forth his military prowess, or

a triumphal progress? some warlike demonstration, or an embroidered smoking-cap and slippers?' asked May. 'What do you say to a genuflecting procession, and making him your shrine?'

Bel laughed merrily, satisfied with the interest evinced in the proposed plan, although not understanding the nature of the proposition, and contenting herself by saying that it must not be in the least common, followed May to the door, and extorted from her a promise that she would come to them again directly after breakfast.

As it was a general holiday, and the nursery party had free access to the school-room, that was fixed upon for the place of consultation. May soon joined them there, and as the centre of an eager group of delighted listeners, was elaborating a programme for Vero's birthday *fête*, when Willy interrupted her by saying,

'I don't see how you can have a triumphal procession. Where are your sheep, or bulls, for sacrifice? Where is your chariot, garment of state, and coronet? Where are your senators, and great men, and soldiers with rewards? If you can't do it properly, I don't see the use of doing it at all.'

'We can make him a laurel crown,' said Con meekly, fearing their plan had received a knock on the head from which it would never recover.

'But in the lesser triumphs they used sometimes to go on foot, used they not?' asked May, laughing—(she had not read Horace, and humbly submitted to Willy as an authority.) 'We can give him a purple robe and myrtle crown, and erect an arch to his honour.'

'Who's to play the gentlemen and commonalty of Rome?' asked Willy.

'If we are put to the push, we might muster the servants, indoor and out: they would make a goodly company. We would not be daunted by a difficulty,' she returned, merrily.

'You mustn't forget that the soldiers used to salute their hero,' said Willy, won by her manner. 'I dare say Vero won't object to that part of it, if you're all going to play soldiers,' he added, mischievously.

'Perhaps May might not like to kiss Vero,' interposed Bel, gravely; 'or else the other part is very nice.'

'You are buzzing about Miss Shelley like a cloud of ephemera,' interrupted the gentleman whose taste was thus unceremoniously under discussion, and who at the moment entered the room with his mother.

'Don't allow them to trouble you,' said Mrs. Drummond, addressing May, while she looked with motherly pleasure at the eager little faces glowing with satisfaction. 'They evidently suppose you possess some talent they can appreciate.'

'Has anybody seen Goppo?' asked Aunt Jane, bustling in. 'He's not in his cage, and is nowhere to be found! I should not wonder if he's gone away altogether, resenting the treatment he met with yesterday.'

'We'll go and seize him, and bring him back a captive in chains,' replied Freddy, catching the spirit of the previous conversation. 'We'll show him that we won't have any monkey tricks here.' And with a business-like air he made his way out of the room, followed by the rest of the young party, to return again a minute after.

'Here he is! just hidden under the stand of his cage!' he soon exclaimed, breathlessly producing the culprit. 'Dmenjus fuss to make! As bad as the life-boat at Llandudno. There they brought it out, and put it on wheels, and it raced through

the town with crowds and crowds after it, and when it was launched, all the people stood watching it through their glasses, and no one could eat their breakfast, because they were so sorry for the ship in distress, and just as the boat got to it, and everybody was so glad, it made a sort of bow and moved off —there was nothing the matter after all! That was a dmenjus fuss about nothing, and so is this!'

Master Freddy was decidedly precocious for seven years old. He spoke with earnest importance, never taking breath until he had arrived at the end of his sentence, although colouring with the effort required for so unbroken a delivery.

Vero, by way of bringing him to order (pointed to an insect creeping over some flowers that were waiting to be arranged) interrupted him by asking,

'Why are you like this green beetle?'

'Give it up.'

'Because your tongue is as long as your body!'

The children were glad to begin work, and led May away in triumph to the farther end of the room. She had already given an impetus to their plan, and they were longing to be engaged upon it.

'By way of commencement, you may string together yards and yards of laurel leaves,' she said, decidedly. 'The log-house at the end of the rose walk is not convertible into a triumphal arch; but we will have an arch half-way up, and twist the pillars both of that and the temple with leaves, as they are twisted in stone at a pretty little chapel there is at Roslyn.'

'I 've come to volunteer aid in the staff,' said Vero, interrupting them: 'I suppose I may be admitted a member of council?'

'Go away! Oh, do leave us—do not come!' said Bel, deprecating his interference.

'We want to be by ourselves this morning,' explained Edith, pleadingly.

Vero looked unwilling, but did the agreeable by leaving the room.

'All the novelty of our plan will consist in the carrying out,' said May, when they were alone. 'Something very pretty should be done in mottoes. I should like them to be formed in flowers of red, white, and blue; but blue flowers are so difficult to get in any quantity, and we have not much time to lose. If Frances, Nora, and Edith will make the wreaths, Bel, Con, and Freddy can gather and sort the leaves. There is nothing like a division of labour,' she added, feeling herself to be the responsible head of the more youthful party, and that she must be methodical.

'What am I to do?' asked Willy, a little indignant at not having been invited to take part in the proceedings.

'I was not sure you would care to help us,' returned May, who had been impressed with his exalted notions of what was necessary for the carrying out of her plan. 'Could you help us with some flags?'

'How many do you want? and what sort?' was the prompt reply.

'Don't you think they should be confined to the English, French, and Sardinian?' she asked, deferring to his opinion. 'If you will help us with flags, our canopy will be perfect; for the rose walk is just in perfection.'

Bel sidled up to her, and kissed her: it was so delightful to have her scheme thus ably abetted, and she was feeling very grateful to her; and Willy, who would have preferred having the kiss himself, told her 'not to be troublesome,—it was so stupid to see girls kissing girls.' Then he left them to talk to some of

the men about the flags, and May's skilful fingers were soon busy weaving a myrtle wreath. The work went on merrily, she saying funny things that convulsed the children with laughter. But Bel was distressed that Vero would fidget about, and anxiously asked May if she thought he could have overheard anything that had been said.

'The breakfast can be laid out in the temple,' said May: 'as it is circular, it will look open and pleasant, and very pretty, with all the pillars twisted with laurel.'

'It will look lovely!' said Bel, energetically.

'If the spiders and daddy-long-legs come to the feast uninvited, we will hang them up as trophies of victory,' suggested May. 'Their heads would not be conspicuous enough to crown the pillars, or we might adopt the King of Dahomey's fashion of adornment.'

Some one tried to turn the handle of the door, but it had been locked, in order to keep away intruders; and May, who was on the alert for a letter from her mamma, asked Edith to go and see who it was.

'I do believe it's Vero again,' suggested Bel: 'he never was so troublesome before.'

Edith went, and the news brought back by her was, that Helen and Vero were going for a ride, and they wanted May to go with them.

Without giving her thoughts form, May had long been under the impression that Helen and Vero were professed friends;—this combination of their names helped to establish the belief; and feeling that they might enjoy their ride more if they were alone, she told Edith to say that she would prefer not riding to-day.

Her decision was greatly to the satisfaction of all present;

and Bel pulled down the blind, in case Mr. Vero should take it into his head to lead his horse up to the window, and look in.

'Master Vero has been slanging me for troubling you with our fancies, as he called them,' said Willy, returning with news as to his success about the flags. 'I suppose he is cross at your not going with them.'

'Will you inquire what flowers are to be had?' said May, feeling half sorry that she had not made one of the riding party. 'They are a very important part of our wants: the mottoes would be so much more unique if we could confine ourselves to the three colours.'

Willy looked thoughtful and helpful; he felt his importance to be enhanced by being enlisted in May's service: and Freddy, thinking he was in difficulty as to how to proceed, said, swelling with importance, in a way that sometimes made Bel compare him to a frog,

'The gardeners 'll get lots of flowers,—any sort you like. They 'll do anything for their "fine young gentleman." Why, they almost didn't know what to do for joy when they heard he 'd come home.'

'It is delightful having Vero home,' said Edith, complaisantly.

'Mamma doesn't turn pale when the papers come in, or keep us waiting in fear while she looks down the "Latest Intelligence,"' returned Nora.

'There was nothing to be done while the war lasted:—no parties at Christmas—no nothing!' said Willy.

'I wanted to send my schooner out as a transport, but there was no one to show me how to rig her,' chimed in Freddy.

'Do you remember thinking brother Vero would grow like those frightful fellows we used to see in the "Illustrated London News" bayoneting the Russians?' asked Con.

'And you saying, that was him giving water to the wounded soldiers?' returned Freddy.

'We were very silly,' said Con.

'I wasn't silly when I said that Vero would be sure to stand up for fair play,' returned Freddy.

'You must not scatter those about the room, Freddy,' said Nora, decidedly; 'they were intrusted to Edith and me. Mamma would be grieved to have one destroyed.'

May turned her head. Freddy was handling a portfolio of drawings, and seeing they were running out at one end, she hastened to rescue them.

'They are sketches our brother made in the Crimea,' explained Nora. 'Mamma considers them very clever, and they are certainly very amusing.'

May's interest was awakened, and taking the portfolio on her lap, she proceeded to look through it.

They were just such scenes as might be imagined to be enacted on a battle-field, but very cleverly and amusingly treated; and she laid them down, one after another, with smiling appreciation, until she came to a not-to-be-mistaken likeness of her brother. After this she felt a sort of proprietorship in the sketches, and handling them affectionately, tied them up securely, and placed them out of reach of little fingers.

Word was sent to the school-room that the children were to have their usual walk, and on hearing from May that there would be time afterwards to complete their task, they readily prepared to comply with their mother's wish. Some materials were needed for their work, and May proposed that they should go and fetch them. This was a great pleasure, not only to the younger ones, but to Nora and Edith, who were not often favoured with so distinguished a companion as May,

and they all left the room in gay spirits to prepare for their walk.

On her way, May put her head in at the door of the morning-room, and seeing it in the occupation of the admiral and his sister, was about to withdraw, but the former called after her, saying,

'Come in, come in! I want that song again.' And she went in. 'You mustn't run away. You don't take me for an ogre?' he asked, confidentially, as if they understood each other. 'I know I'm a sad gouty old tyrant, but when people take fright at me. and run away, I sometimes give them a few lower-deck shots by way of sport, d'ye see?'

And he laughed in a waggish way, heartily enjoying the thought of the fun.

'I have a great fear of fire-arms, generally,' returned May, meeting him in his own way; 'but as you haven't shot your canary bird, I will trust you. We are going out for a walk now, I will try and find you some gout-weed,' she added mischievously.

The young party had decided on going through the park to the town, and they had just reached the gate which led on to the high road, when they saw Robert Lee and his sister coming towards them.

'How delightful it would be if Margaret would come and help us!' said Edith.

And running forwards, she engaged her in confidential chat, until she had extorted from her the desired promise.

'I have a visit to make close by,' said Margaret; 'will any one like to come?'

It was arranged that May should go in with her, the rest of the party accompany Robert to the town, and that there should be a reunion at the cottage.

Margaret found a visitor there before her, the same lady who had ignored her acquaintance on the day of the meeting. Knowing her to be forward in all charitable movements, Margaret had encouraged the thought that it was her more than ordinary absorbtion in good works that had, on that occasion, made her seem so regardless of her; and kindly expressed a hope that their visit would not be allowed to interfere with hers. A slight bow being the only reply, she sat waiting the lady's pleasure to depart, while May, ever observant, quietly philosophized on the *morale* of things around her, until her eyes and ears were brought into more active exercise by noting the novel way in which the stranger performed a visit of charity.

Addressing the bedridden woman in a stiff, precise voice, she authoritatively inquired of her the exact amount of pecuniary aid she had received since last she saw her; and then crossing the room with a noisy, bustling, consequential air, drew up the blind to the top of the window, not only jarring on the invalid's nerves by the sharp irritating noise, but exposing her eyes to a blinding light. This proceeding she justified by the information—valuable, no doubt—that light was a purifier, and the more of it she admitted the better. Then scrutinizing the furniture of the room, and pointing to sundry articles much valued by their owner, exclaimed, depreciatingly,

'All this lumber breeds insects. A great part of it should be sent right away;' adding emphatically, 'I will see to it for you.' Which last sentence conveyed to the poor woman's mind the dread thought that her precious goods and chattels were to be summarily disposed of without her leave.

Margaret, whose manner to the poor was delicately considerate, not to say chivalrous, was so thoroughly disgusted as to be inclined to leave the room; but on the old woman detecting her

intention, she gave her a look that was touching in its yearning helplessness, and she decided to stay where she was.

The next service rendered by this benevolent lady to her poor friend was, to overhaul her cupboards, and kindly to rid them of anything for which she could not discover a use. This act of philanthropy seemed to put her self-denial to a severe test; for, as she withdrew first a bottle containing some rancid unguent, and then a phial emitting a pungent fume, her disgust and grimacing gave evidence of the trial to which her olfactory nerves were subjected.

After performing as many of such kind services as she felt incumbent on her for one day, she took her leave, bowing patronizingly to May; who, however, did not return the bow. She felt her to be so repulsive and ill-bred that, to use her own language, she could not look at her; and Margaret alone recognized the condescension.

It was difficult for Miss Lee to find a suitable thing to say to the invalid without compromising her last visitor; but the woman interrupted the silence by exclaiming,

'It would break my heart to part with they baskets. My oldest son brought them for me all the way from the Ingies. Might I be so bold, Miss, as to ask you to give me that key?'

Margaret did as she was requested, and seating herself by the bed-side, produced a garment of a peculiar construction that she had been making according to the invalid's own directions, and consulted with her sympathizingly as to whether it would quite meet her requirements.

Tears came to the woman's eyes: she could not forget her last visitor, and she said, helplessly,

'She always do do so. I dare say I ought not to complain, for she gives me a shilling a week quite regular.'

Margaret thought that that by no means entitled her to take liberties, but tried to soothe the woman by talking to her of the young party they had arranged to meet on their way from the town, and some news from the hall that she knew would interest the old body, more especially that of Captain Drummond's safe return from the war; and after turning over her text-roll, and pointing to some comfortable words for her to meditate upon, took her leave, promising a longer visit shortly.

They found the children at high romps outside. Nothing pleased them better than to get Mr. Lee for their companion in a walk; and when they started for home, they proposed, by way of a novelty, that he should lead them by some untrodden path they had never been before—that, in fact, they should have a game of follow-my-leader.

To gratify them he did as he was desired, and took them a chase through the wild part of the park, where the stubble from last year's brake and bracken considerably impeded their progress; but it might have been observable to any one interested, that May was not allowed to suffer any inconvenience from the roughness of the way, but that arm-full after arm-full of dry fern leaves were skilfully thrown in her path whenever the roots of trees or any other impediment made her footing difficult.

She found it very convenient to have a squire of six feet high, one so dexterous in answering her requirements, and grew very merry and sociable; and on coming out from the tangle on to an open part of the park, she turned round, and looking at those behind her as much as to say, 'I 've got over my trouble first,' burst out into a gleeful laugh.

'There they are!' exclaimed Nora, as at the next minute she stood by May's side.

And there they were—Vero, Helen, and Gertrude, returning from their ride.

At the first sight of them the former turned as if to meet them; then seemed suddenly to change his mind, for he merely raised his hat, and went straight to the house.

They all arrived nearly at the same time, and the children urged Robert to go in; but as Vero, who was standing by, did not second their invitation, he said he would send for Margaret, and then walked hastily away.

Mrs. Drummond had come forward to greet the young party, and on Edith whispering to her that Margaret had come to help them, she said,

'Run after Mr. Lee, and tell him that I hope he will give us as much time this evening as he can spare.'

May had gone in to the admiral, to take him some groundsel for his canary, and to tell him that she supposed gout-weed did not grow in the chalk, for she could not find any, when an unusual noise in the hall attracted her attention, and set her wondering who had arrived.

'They should have had a bill printed, to say that they were coming, as they announced Harry Smith's expected arrival to the Cheltenham folks last year,' said the admiral, as if challenging her to merriment.

Four ladies were ushered in, and while the room was filling with flounces and furbelows, and Miss Trelawney was stumbling forward over her dress, he whispered,

'Quite in the Soncy Betty style, eh? Ease her when she pitches. They look as if they were straining against a head wind. When we sailors see our vessels in such straits, we furl sail and make all snug; but they don't seem to be up to it.'

In spite of this attempt to disturb her gravity, May was com-

mendably demure, and did not respond cordially to Miss Trelawney's assertion that they were quite old friends.

'We've come to get Captain Drummond's experiences previous to going abroad,' said Miss Trelawney, who always acted as spokeswoman, even in the presence of her mother. 'You've visited Constantinople, I know,' addressing herself to Vero, 'and can tell us of all the lions *en route*.'

'There isn't much chance of encountering lions in a transport ship in the Mediterranean,' returned Vero; 'and I had a very cursory view of the Turkish capital.'

'We've never reached Constantinople, although we've been a great deal abroad,' she replied. 'What a charming little shandredan!' she exclaimed, making her way to the window in which the admiral sat, to look at a vehicle that had returned from taking some of the tiny children for a drive.

The admiral moved his foot as if it had received some damage.

'We are going away while our house is renovating,' continued the young lady, returning to her seat. 'Now that we are grown up' (May thought they had been grown up for a long time) 'one of the state-rooms is to be prepared for my occupation; the one I have hitherto occupied is not sufficiently spacious for my wardrobe, and jewel-cases, and all I require.'

'Do you mean your room won't hold your jewel-case?' asked Johnetta, in a loud aside, who, observing the slip her sister had made, ungenerously took advantage of it.

'They do spar so,' said the helpless mother, to whom Mrs. Drummond was compassionately devoting herself. 'I wish they wouldn't.'

'You haven't told us anything yet, Captain Drummond,' persisted Williametta, not vouchsafing to notice her sister's remark.

'I am very anxious that it shan't be said that we travelled with our eyes shut, and I should think there must be an immense deal to see in Turkey.'

'There's no place like Naples,' interposed Johnetta, with enthusiasm. 'There are rows and rows of jewellers' shops, and such lovely lava and coral ornaments.'

'I've heard, too, that you see Punch and Judy to perfection,' returned Vero. 'I suppose the devil, and the hangman, and Punch himself, are all in Neapolitan costume? How about the dog Toby?'

'Oh,—Pulchinello? I hardly knew what you meant,' said Johnetta, simperingly. 'Yes, that is very first-rate, and the foreign dogs are very superior to ours.'

'Indeed!' said Vero, with forced gravity.

'And the Pope's dragoons are such splendid fellows,' continued the young lady, in her excitement losing her topography. 'They are always lying about the steps of the Vatican, and are so very polite if you ask for information; and then it is so nice to be pelted with sugar-plums, as you are at the Carnival, and to have baskets of gold sprinkled on your head as you pass through the streets.'

'Do you mean the pieces of yellow paper that they pour out in baskets-full?' asked Williametta.

'They call it gold,' was the answer; and she turned to Vero, and said, confidentially, 'We are so anxious for Rena to travel: there is nothing like it, to give polish.'

'Is that your experience?' returned Vero, bowing with a mock courtesy insufficient to veil his satire.

'I think there's no place beats Paris,' she persisted.

'I didn't know you had been there,' interposed Rena; 'I don't remember it.'

'I went with mamma,' returned the elder sister, with a severe look, intended for a settler.

'Do you mean when you were two years old?' persisted Rena, innocently.

All looked uneasy, and Vero made a diversion by crossing the room, and addressing himself to Helen, while Mrs. Drummond looked as if she would be glad to be rid of her visitors.

As they didn't seem inclined to go, May asked privately if she might leave the room and get on with her work, for that they had a great deal to do in a very little time.

Mrs. Drummond assented; but May had only just got fairly settled when, much to her surprise, the Trelawneys entered the school-room in full force. They had especially requested to see the children, and under that pretext had obtruded thus upon their privacy.

But it soon became evident that the children were a very secondary attraction; for Miss Trelawney at once seated herself by May, and whispered something about condolence, adding,

'Who'd have thought of the old fellow playing you such a trick? I wouldn't believe it at first, but I suppose there's no mistake about it?'

May's colour rose, but she was so taken by surprise as to be off her guard, and Rena (who was a sort of ugly duckling in the family, and possessed all the little share of good sense and good feeling it could boast) interposed, saying,

'If you should be wrong, Etta! It was only Miss de Febvre told you.'

'At all events, it is not usual to discuss a stranger's private affairs unasked,' said May, with dignity.

'I don't call any one a stranger that you've known all your life,' said Williametta, colouring angrily in her turn; and, in

order to make her indignation manifest, she walked over to where Margaret Lee was sitting. To her she made known, in a loud *sotto voce*, that William Bryant, Sir Lionel's heir, was detained in Rome by malaria fever, but that she had heard there were to be great doings at the Warren when he took possession.

'You go and tell the children the names of all your hundred dolls,' she said, finding Rena standing by her side. (The poor girl, having no other companions, had spent a great deal of time with her dumb friends, and this childish taste was used as a taunt by her sisters long after she had lost it.)

'They are all busy,' said Rena.

Helen just then making her appearance, May rose, linked her arm in that of her friend, and led her from the room.

'I suppose Miss Douglas is setting her cap at Captain Drummond,' pursued Williametta, quite forgetting Frances' presence, in her annoyance at being treated as she felt to be cavalierly; 'but I don't think he 's likely to be caught, for it is very generally known she is nobody. She 's haughty enough, if that will help her.'

'She is handsome and clever at least,' said Johnetta, by way of opposition.

'She 's as handsome as May Shelley is pretty,' chimed in Rena.

'Very possibly, since it isn't certain that May Shelley would be called pretty. At all events, beauty doesn't go for much without something substantial to back it, and she won't have a penny, in spite of her having been spoken of as an heiress all her life.'

Frances was blushing deeply, the children listening with amazement; and Margaret, who wished to put a stop to the conversation, replied uneasily,

'I don't think you will find any one here to sympathize with your opinion.'

'Before she went to France she was a regular little hoyden,' continued Williametta, evidently unable to control her temper. 'She used to jump on and off her horse, to look at all the new babies in the parish. I wonder what would be thought of that in fashionable circles?'

'I may be an equivocal judge of what may be appreciated in the circles to which you refer,' said Margaret, warmly, 'and neither papa or I see her with fashionable eyes, but we think her charms and her beauty quite unique. Lame as papa is, he will hobble to the window to see her pass. He always calls her the Queen of Hearts, or the Queen of Fairies, or some such pet name.'

'I should think he might have enough of that,' interrupted Miss Trelawney, 'for she is, or used to be, always about. She'd think nothing of riding about without a groom. My governess, a very superior person, gave her up as quite incorrigible.'

'We think so very much of her,' interposed Margaret, hoping to settle the matter, 'I should have thought she might please any one, however exacting their standard of beauty might be.'

Vero here entered the room to say that Lady Trelawney was waiting for them; and as there was something in him that always put a stop to scandal, nothing more was said. They had old remembrances of him as a boy, when he had shown them up in a way somewhat terrific to their self-love. All traducers and scandalmongers fought shy of Vero.

CHAPTER XXVII.

'I have ventured,
Like little wanton boys that swim on bladders,
These many summers in a sea of glory,
But far beyond my depth: my high-blown pride
At length broke under me, and now has left me
Weary and old with service.'

'WHAT shocking girls!' exclaimed Nora, as May entered the room to recommence her work. 'This is the first time I have seen them. I knew Gertrude did not approve of them, but did not expect anything so frightful.'

In times gone by May would have indulged in her talent for mimickry; but their conversation having reminded her of an error into which she had once fallen while under the influence of Miss de la Touche, she merely replied that 'they had not had at all a nice governess.'

Good example had not been without its effect on May, whose conscience was daily becoming more and more tender, and who was growing into the habit of thinking what it was right to do or to say, and of imposing duties on herself, as duties. In this case conscience whispered that in her judgment of those whom Nora justly described as 'shocking girls' she ought to leave a large place for pity—that the Trelawneys were subjects for her forbearance, rather than her unmitigated disgust; and she skil-

fully turned the conversation from their distasteful visitors to the work in which they were interested.

Luncheon was sent to them in the school-room by request, and all worked busily until dinner, after which Mrs. Drummond expressed a wish to have them in the drawing-room. Vero was going to read the Laureate's last poem, and the children declared that Mr. Lee sang the loveliest songs: accordingly it was settled that the work must wait.

All was in preparation: the men were seeing to the woodwork of the arch and the handles of the flags; the nurses were busy with coloured calico, under the direction of Master Willy; and except the purple robe and gold chains with which Mrs. Drummond had promised to supply them, they saw everything in a sufficient state of readiness to enable them to feel secure that their project would be duly accomplished.

When May made her appearance in the drawing-room, the admiral at once adopted her as his especial pet, and laughingly informed her that his gouty foot was suffering from the heavy metal her friends, the Trelawneys, carried about in their skirts, and that, like the children, he must have a song to make him well; but he would be content to hear the 'Coquette' again.

May intimated her readiness to sing as often as he wished; and after the reading of the poem, she made her way to the piano.

Helen and she had just finished their first song, when Robert Lee was announced, and May frankly said that 'she was quite looking forward to the pleasure of hearing him sing.'

Looking forward! Take care, May! Do not ignore the necessity of guarding your speech with something of the restraint conventionalism requires. You ask what harm is there in expressing a feeling so simple and unobjectionable as the pleasure

to be anticipated in hearing a pleasant song, sung in a pleasant voice; and while entering with sympathy into your unsophisticated question, those who wish to spare you trials which, though treated as merely sentimental by some, are, in fact, very real, still warn you against the indiscretion of saying or even looking all that you feel.

Robert Lee did not require pressing, but at her solicitation sang one song after another, in a rich voice, while she exchanged appreciative remarks with the admiral; and the evening drew to a close too soon for the pleasure of the happy party assembled in the drawing-room at the hall.

The next day was a very busy one, especially with May, who had the regulation of the work quite under her control; and she had just come in from the garden, after having given directions to some of the men about the scaffoldings, when she saw the postman delivering the letters. Finding upon inquiry that there was one for her, she went to Mrs. Drummond, and put her in possession of its contents.

'Mamma wishes me to go to London by the early train to-morrow,' she said. 'Reginald has not been able to continue his journey without rest, and has not yet arrived; but he has written to say that he hopes to see me on his arrival in London. The carriage is to be at the station for me at eleven o'clock.'

Tears came to her eyes, for her brother's anxiety that she should be present on his arrival, suggested the thought of his being so seriously ill as to feel that his hours were numbered; and seeing Helen, who was present, colour and then turn pale, she put the note into her hands for perusal.

'Mr. Drummond is going to town by the first train to-morrow,' said her hostess. She was quiet for a time, thinking only of Lady Agramont's cause for anxiety, then said, 'We shall be

sorry to lose you. Do not tell the children you are going. To-morrow they must know it; but I will prepare them for it. Your absence will rob them of half their pleasure.'

'I have told them that the birthday welcome was to be confined to themselves,' said May, 'and we shall have time to complete everything.'

'It is not only your help they'll miss, but you,' returned Mrs. Drummond, kissing her affectionately.

A very early hour found the children astir on the birthday morning; and Helen, who rose early, heard the little things knocking at Vero's door, and afterwards saw them lead him in triumph down the rose walk. She could not hear what was said, but she heard bursts of gleeful laughter, which she thought were the result, in all probability, of Vero's ecstatic exclamations of surprise and rapture at the reception prepared for him.

When May went down to breakfast, Bel met her, exclaiming,

'He won't keep on his robe and myrtle wreath; but he is in the temple. He was so surprised! He said magicians must have been at work—wizards, conjurors, necromancers, or some such people; that he felt as if he had been invited to breakfast in some fairy bower; that such a transformation as has taken place in a night seems almost superhuman.'

Vero caught sight of May in the distance, and was coming forward, in the hope of receiving a welcome from her, when Aunt Jane appeared from a path that branched off about half-way up the rose walk, and by her precise greeting put a prosaic end to all his lover-like speculations. Drawing herself up to her full height, she addressed him thus:

'Many happy returns of the day to you, nephew! I see others have been before me with their good wishes; but I have confidence that mine will not be the least acceptable. There's an

old saying that a little help is worth a great deal of pity, and I think the saying will not be the less true if we change the word pity into congratulation. I intend to make you a present this morning, as a birthday gift, and also in appreciation of the honour that has accrued to the family through you. Your name has been very honourably mentioned, and both your uncle and myself feel proud of you!'

Vero stood impatiently snipping at the shrubs with his walking-stick. He saw that May was an innocent auditor of what was intended solely for his ear.

'If you had given me a word in your choice of a profession, it should have been double the sum,' she added, handing him a cheque for a thousand guineas.

'Still wishing to kick off my spurs, aunt!' he said, jokingly. 'It would ill become the recipient of so goodly a sum to consider under what circumstances he might have had more. Many thanks!' he added, accepting her gift as if in a minute after he would think no more of it.

'We are very well pleased with you on the whole,' continued the lady, trying what praise would do towards conciliating her *nonchalant* favourite. 'You may come to a better mind yet!'

His thoughts were on the wing, but he replied absently,

'Well, thank you, aunt. Strange things do happen. Who'd have thought of the whole English nation joining in prayer for the French army, as was the case yesterday?'

'Who indeed?' said the lady, turning up her eyes; then adding, inquiringly, 'I hope we're not going to be fooled by foreigners!' And a drop of dew falling on her prunella slipper, she looked as if it would be wisdom in her to return to the house.

Perhaps Vero seemed as if he would be glad to be quit of her

(it is not unlikely he was fearing May would escape him), for Aunt Jane remarked, somewhat tartly,

'The sooner the better, you think?'

Vero, though incapable of bartering his attentions or independence of action for gold — 'of flattering Neptune for his trident' — was easily moved at the thought of wounding her affection, and, offering her his arm in a winning way peculiarly his own, said something about the morning air being damp, and led her carefully back to the house.

A spark of genuine kindness from him was more precious to Aunt Jane than the devotion of all the world beside would have been. He was her idol; and scant as was his return for love bestowed, it seemed precious to her in proportion to its scantiness.

'I'm going to give the workhouse children a scramble,' he said by way of a last word.

'Take these five shillings, then, and buy them some brandy-balls,' was the gracious reply.

Vero's thanks were louder for the five shillings than they had been for the thousand guineas; and gladdened by the thought that he had adjusted the grievance, he went in search of May; but on hearing that breakfast would not be ready for half an hour, she had returned to her room to prepare for her journey. He at once started on his errand, followed by all the schoolroom and nursery party, except the two babies.

After emptying the sweetmeat shop of all its 'goodies,' they set off to where they knew they should find the children at play, and on reaching the spot, began their sport in good earnest; Vero always throwing in favour of the weakest.

'This is a great deal more rational way of amusing people, than to set them to climb up greasy poles or to jump in sacks,'

said Freddy, magnificently; 'or to take out apples with their mouths from a tub of dirty water,' he added, at the same time looking to Vero for applause.

'Do you think so?' returned Vero. 'Perhaps the customs you despise have more claim to respectability than you are aware of, young gentleman. I can tell you that some such sports as those you mention can boast a far-off antiquity, if that will entitle them to your honour. Virgil speaks of games practised at feasts held in honour of Bacchus, not unlike those to which you object. Bacchus, you know, was the god of wine; and considering the goat an enemy to the vine, from its habit of biting it, they used to take a goat's skin, fill it with wine, sew it up close, and after anointing it with oil to make it slippery, set the people to hop on it.'

'It could have been nothing but tumble upon tumble,' interposed Bel, feeling that she could not hop long on one leg, even without the slippery impediment. And as she began to practise hopping, all the other children began to hop, until Vero stopped to talk to some labourers.

Presently merry laughing arrested his attention, and he saw a goat butting at the children so vigorously with its one horn, that they were obliged to be very much on the alert to dodge its attacks.

'If a little old woman, in a red cloak, met a goat down a narrow lane, what would they turn to?' asked Edith.

'Why, that's as old, as old,' said precocious Master Freddy. 'The old woman would turn to a scarlet runner, and the goat to butter, to be sure.'

'The sooner you get out of the way the better,' said Vero, who was anxious to get back to the hall, that he might not lose a chance of seeing May. 'The beast is showing her indigna-

tion at the imaginary liberties we have been taking with the goat tribe generally, and it won't be her fault if she doesn't punish you.'

They at once made their way towards home, but only arrived in time to see May about to start. The hour of the train had been altered, and she had only had time for a hurried breakfast in her room.

Vero, much disappointed, said he should go to the station.

'Be home as quickly as possible,' said Mrs. Drummond. 'The breakfast will wait.'

'Are you likely to see Mr. Lee or Margaret?' asked May, as he sat opposite her in the carriage. 'I have a little note I want delivered, if you wouldn't mind the trouble.'

And she handed him an envelope, on which he recognized similar stylish characters to those upon which he had commented during his stay in the Crimea.

'Will it be troubling you?' she asked, seeing an expression on his face she didn't understand.

'Not in the least.'

Opening the railway carriage in search of a place for her, he found Lee occupying one seat in it. It is not quite certain that it was not his intention to withdraw, but Mr. Drummond, who stood by, helped May in at once, and all he could do was to stand by and hear her frankly-expressed pleasure at finding who was to be her travelling companion.

Vero returned her note. She took it, with thanks, and bade him a warm adieu; but Vero looked in vain for some sign that he was regarded by her with any special interest.

Instead of returning with the carriage, as was expected, he bade the coachman 'go on,' and leaping a fence, took an un-

frequented path which led in an opposite direction to the hall, leaving the servant to speculate as to why his usually tractable young master should so suddenly have taken it into his head to disregard Mrs. Drummond's overheard request that he would return home as quickly as possible. Though constitutionally the reverse of moody or melancholy, Vero was feeling at that moment as if everything had lost interest for him. Until now he was not aware of the fact that the pretty merry girl, to whom he had been first attracted when he saw her as a little child on the hunting-field, had his happiness in her keeping; but, alas! such was now his experience. We say alas, for Vero had discovered Robert Lee's undisguised admiration for her, and it seemed to him that it was about to be returned. He walked on at a great rate, as people are apt to do under excitement; and after tiring himself out, took a seat on a stile leading into his father's park, and was thinking, that as a soldier he ought to have known how much of success depends on the celerity of one's movements, when Edith, Willy, and Bel came up to him, saying that they had been searching for him everywhere.

'What is it, Vero?' asked Edith, looking at him wonderingly.

'Do you mean that song-thrush,' fixing his eye on a bough overhead, 'or the breeze moving the branches?'

'I mean, why do you look so tired?' said Edith.

'You must make allowance for the morning's fatigue,' was the rejoinder, in a cheerful voice; and he jumped off the stile, remarking that being lionized was hard work.

'The others have gone another way to hunt for you,' continued Edith.

'Isn't it a pity May has left us?' asked Bel. 'She told me I might call her May. We shouldn't have known in the least how to have decorated the temple but for her. But she can do

everything, and she is so kind.' And she went on to describe what had seemed to her May's marvellous ingenuity.

'Mamma thought we might have gone to the waterfall, as aunt proposed it,' interposed Edith.

'Then we should not have been the first geese there to-day,' returned Vero, 'for it is quite dry, judging by the noise I heard some geese making.'

'Nearly all waterfalls are dry when you go hoping to see the water,' returned Willy, looking up sharply. 'You haven't been there this morning?'

Here the rest of the young party joined them; and on Freddy jumping upon him, and inquiring as to the cause of his absence, Vero pushed him aside in a decided way, and strode towards the house—Freddy said, 'like an elephant'—as if he did not heed anything in his path.

The admiral was the first to accost him on his return.

'And so you have taken away my sun-bird?' he began. 'I didn't bargain to part with her so soon. She had just begun to make my gout-stool go easy. I was thinking of proposing handsome for her. Who 's that fine fellow who was playing Cupid in the form of Hercules last night? If his brain is proportioned to his bulk, there must be something in him.'

'I suppose you are speaking of Lee,' returned Vero, indifferently. 'He owns, or rather his father owns, the farm on the hill.'

'You don't think much of him, I see.'

'On the contrary!' said Vero, coming to his senses, and feeling dishonoured at having sacrificed his truthfulness even in expression. 'Both he and his father have always been held by us in high esteem.—What can Miss de Febvre want here?' he continued, as he saw that lady coming towards the house.

It was well known that if Miss de Febvre could find an excuse for a visit to any of the great houses in the neighbourhood, such an excuse would be turned to advantage; but that she would not do so without at least some slight pretext was equally well known.

A few minutes afterwards Mrs. Drummond entered the room, and asked Vero to write down the address of the hotel at which Lord Agramont was staying, and she went to her *secretaire* to show him where he would find a card for the purpose.

She was not aware that her visitor had followed her, and was much surprised, on turning round, to see her bowing and smirking to the gentlemen.

Feeling at a loss how to meet her manner, which struck her as unusually restless and excited, she begged her to sit down, and asked if she were going to see Lord Agramont.

She would not sit down, but announced, in a short manner, that Sir Lionel Shelley's servant had been to Dr. Coleridge for the address, and that, as he did not know it, and she particularly wished to congratulate Captain Drummond on his return home, she had offered to come and see if it was to be had at the hall. She stood playing nervously with a bracelet, until suddenly a rattling noise gave notice that one of its links had broken. Instead of gathering up the pieces, and making no more ado about it, as it was natural to expect she would do, she sat down by a table and began to put it together again, keeping Vero in diligent search for imaginary lost pieces. After having succeeded in re-stringing it, she put it round her wrist, and asked him to snap it for her.

But a link was missing, and he at once saw the impossibility of the task she had imposed upon him. She persisted, however, in urging him to try, until at last the admiral exclaimed, impatiently,

'You might as well try to hang a flea with a two-inch hawser.'

His voice was gruff, and it made the young lady start. Vero thought she looked ill and so prematurely old, that he felt pity for her, and taking the bracelet, he wrapped the pieces up securely, then put them kindly into her hand, and waited at the door to open it for her.

'I must ask you to show me the way through the park,' she said, addressing him in an anxious, restless way. 'Strange, isn't it? that I should have lost my way, as I am so accustomed to Windsor?'

Vero didn't know that she was 'accustomed' to Windsor, but it seemed very unaccountable to him that she should have any difficulty in finding her way out of the park, after having paid so many previous visits to the hall. He went for his hat, and when he returned, found her shaking hands with the children, who were standing in a group by the door.

As they left the house, Vero noticed Freddy looking very indignant, and putting his fist in his mouth as if he were hurt.

'Have you taken a lesson from the animals at the Zoological Gardens?' he asked. 'I've heard of a camel eating his hump, but never of a boy eating his fingers.'

'What did she do that for?' burst forth Freddy, with difficulty restraining tears of indignation. 'She pinched me as hard as ever she could!' he added, looking angrily at Miss de Febvre.

'You require as delicate handling as my scarlet coat, that turns blue at a touch,' returned Vero, considerably puzzled.

A short time after, he returned to the house, and entering the room that was still in the occupation of Mrs. Drummond and the admiral, remarked with feeling,

'There is something wrong with her! When I left her she burst into a fit of crying, and said something about "it serving

her right—that it was all jealousy of Miss Shelley—that she had lent herself to a plot, and what had come of it? for that William Bryant was dead!" She hung about me in a way that was extremely inconvenient, and finished by asking me to carry her shoes, as her feet were sore from her walk!'

Mrs. Drummond looked concerned, and remarked, thoughtfully,

'I have always observed an extreme restlessness and flightiness about her. The sort of life she has led must have been very enfeebling to the mind. I have heard her spoken of as a well-known gossip.'

'She has always been flighty,' said Vero, 'and entirely uncontrolled. I have not known what to make of her.'

'A balloon without ballast is a very awkward thing, very awkward thing indeed,' interposed the admiral. 'I should fear her malady to be the result of what shrewd-thinking Jeremy Taylor calls "envy and idleness married together." I think he quotes Plutarch, when "he rarely well compares curious and inquisitive ears to the execrable gates of cities, out of which only malefactors, and hangmen, and tragedies pass—nothing that is chaste and holy."'

'She is an orphan,' remarked Mrs. Drummond, leniently. 'I don't know any class of people more to be pitied than single women, possessing a small independence, without sufficient character or principle to prompt them to occupy themselves profitably. Perhaps I ought to have tried to be useful to her,' she added, upbraiding herself for neglect, and hoping the unhingement of the poor young woman's mind might not be as serious as it seemed likely to be. She went to look after her own girls, feeling thankful that they were subjected to home influences, so tranquillizing in their effect,—determining that as far as the

matter was within her control, they should early acquire a habit of application, and of occupying themselves in such useful interests as were likely to have a permanent hold on their affections.

Vero went to the children. He had promised them that he would make a division of some of his Eastern spoils, and, out of sorts as he was, he would not allow his own feelings to interfere with their pleasure.

Before commencing the distribution, and after they were all seated, he placed an empty chair, and taking the one next it, began work.

In such a miscellaneous committee, it was difficult to come to a decision as to what articles should be appropriated to each of the candidates; but he adjusted proportions very satisfactorily, except that it was observed that the very prettiest and most curious things found their way to the empty chair.

'If May had been here, they would have been for her,' said Bel, with a no less clever than unexpected conception of the truth.

The unfurling of a flag hid the expression of Vero's face, and as he had completed his distribution, he went from the room (probably to get some breakfast), and left the children to enjoy their treasures.

Helen, meanwhile, did not like having been left behind, and blamed the false delicacy, as she now pronounced it to be, that had prevented her asking May to write her the news of so much concern to all she loved best. Surely, she thought, her sisterly relationship with May would render such a proceeding simply natural. It was an effort to her to appear light hearted, and she was glad when bed-time came. The next morning her eye caught sight of letters on her plate at the breakfast-table: one

was from her guardian, to the effect that, fearing a great shock was awaiting Lady Agramont, he was anxious that she should have the support of all her children; that she had hesitated to propose for Helen to accompany May, fearing to deprive her of pleasure; but that for himself he could not do without his first-born, and so had written to summon her. He added that a carriage should be at the station, at a given hour, to convey them to Eaton Place.

A gratified look passed over Helen's face. She required something of the mind or heart to make her happy; and, had it not been for the anticipated trouble at hand, this proof of love would have made her happy indeed.

After she had put Mrs. Drummond in possession of the contents of the note, Vero asked,

'Why should we not all start for London? I must confess to feeling very unfit for gaiety until something more is known about Bosanquet. The only difficulty is, in postponing the *fête* to the cottagers.'

All felt that at the present time Vero's power, though nominally mediate, was in fact absolute; and the young people, assured that Mrs. Drummond's will and his would coincide, exclaimed eagerly,

'Oh, do settle it so! Mamma said we should have some sight-seeing when you came home. We haven't seen the Crystal Palace yet.'

Mrs. Drummond was no recluse, but provided all the innocent enjoyments of life for her children; and as a time of unusual gaiety had been promised them on Vero's return, she said that if he could arrange satisfactorily for the postponement of the *fête*, she would not make any objection to go to London. The result was, that the elder branches of the Drummond family, compre-

hending the admiral, Aunt Jane, and her menagerie, accompanied Helen and Frances to London, leaving the children and nurses to follow a few days after.

There was a note awaiting Helen at Eaton Place, saying, that as Reginald had not arrived, and he was expected hourly, no one could come to welcome them, but that she should hear again soon.

And we must leave them to settle themselves in their new quarters, while we look after the anxious mother who was awaiting the return of her invalid son.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

'Dost thou lie so low?
Are all thy glories, triumphs, spoils,
Shrunk to this little measure?'

THE non-arrival of Reginald at the time expected caused Lady Agramont some days of painful suspense; but on that on which Helen reached London it was put to an end, and at a summons from Lord Agramont she went into the hall to welcome her son. Her first sight of him was leaning against a pillar for support, and for a moment his form seemed unfamiliar to her; the tones of his voice alone convinced her of his identity. Reginald's voice would have awakened interest even in a stranger. No wonder, then, that the mother's heart bounded and rebounded as the well-known accents fell welcomely on her ear.

Seeing he did not attempt to move, Lord Agramont offered him his arm, his mother supported him on the other side, while May followed behind, a sorrowing spectator of such manifest helplessness. On reaching the room assigned to him, the invalid, who was thoroughly exhausted, and quite incapable of further exertion, suggested that he should be better able to talk if he were allowed to get into bed at once, courteously express-

ing his regret to his step-father at so inauspicious a commencement of their acquaintance.

'We are all prepared to be nurses for the present,' was Lord Agramont's gracious reply, and he proceeded to minister to his comfort in a way which proved that he, at least, was not unfitted for the calling.

'Clean linen and a bed on *terra firma* are too tempting to be resisted,' said Reginald, in an almost inaudible voice, but with an attempt at cheerfulness.

This effort to inspirit them was so evidently an effort, that Lord Agramont, in order to spare him further excitement, asked his mother to intrust him to his care for a time. She accordingly left the room; and when the two gentlemen were alone, Reginald explained that much of his present suffering arose from a splinter of bone in his shoulder, which, although he had undergone considerable mangling in the attempts made at its extraction, was still unremoved, and that while such was the case he must remain as far off recovery as at the time of the accident.

'In that case the sooner surgical aid is called in the better,' returned Lord Agramont. And after helping his patient to undress, he soon resigned his place to Lady Agramont, and turned his thoughts to the doctors.

Once again by the bed-side of her son, Lady Agramont stooped to kiss him, and seeing large drops of perspiration standing on his brow, she supplied him with one of her soft handkerchiefs for their removal; then, discovering that he could not raise his arm, gently proceeded to wipe away the damp hair from his blanched forehead.

'It is jolly to be a boy again!' was the faint acknowledgment, and he smiled as a substitute for words he was unable to utter.

This attempt at sportfulness so affected Lady Agramont, that

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for a moment she lost control over herself: her heart was too full to speak, and she stood choking down her emotion, while lifting up her heart to God in silent supplication that he who seemed on the very confines of eternity might even yet be spared to her. 'Thy will be done' did not form part of her prayer then—it was a passionate appeal for Divine mercy.

Reginald divined the cause of her silence, and said affectionately,

'We need stern discipline to bring us to our bearings. Do not allow yourself to be unduly anxious. Thanks to you, I believe it will be well with me either way; but I have great hope that a skilful manipulator will relieve me at once, and if not, this is a very different sick-couch to the one that might have been mine. It is a part of the Christian philosophy you taught me to be prepared for whatever may happen,' he added, cheerfully.

Here a tray was brought in with refreshments, and Lady Agramont roused herself to administer them, and told May to seat herself on the bed, to help to support her brother.

May gladly did as she was desired; and Reginald asked,

'Do you know how Drummond is? It was thought doubtful if he would reach England alive.'

'I think he is quite well—he seemed so,' said May. 'He came up to London with Helen and Frances. They are our sisters, you know. We were staying at Lawton Hall when your telegram arrived.'

Reginald looked interested, but merely remarked that 'Vero would not give in while he had a leg to stand upon,' and proceeded to partake of the food set before him, while May amused him with a description of their new relationships, and the delight she experienced in them; taking care so to measure and modulate her voice as to render it acceptable to nerves the most sensitive.

While they were thus engaged, Lord Agramont entered the room to announce the arrival of the doctor, and the ladies withdrew. After a few leading questions having been put, the splinter was pronounced to be the exciting cause of the suffering to which their patient was being subjected; further aid was summoned, and a consultation took place, the opinion resulting from which was, that amputation of the arm would probably be considered necessary.

Reginald requested an undisguised opinion of his case, and on being told that the fact of the wound having been probed by unskilful hands might occasion an important operation, he suggested that it would be desirable that his mother might remain uninformed as to particulars. Lord Agramont proposed that he should be removed to his town residence; but the doctors vetoed the proposition at once, and giving directions as to the treatment to be observed during the time that was to intervene before the surgeons were to try their skill, they left the hotel.

Under any circumstances there is something very trying in the anticipation of a surgical operation,—where the subject to be operated on is an only son, intensely so; and all will pity Lady Agramont, as she strives bravely to suppress herself, and to cheer and strengthen her patient.

A great part of each day was spent, both by her and May, in the sick-room. She had requested that her son might be left to her sole charge until the services of a more experienced nurse were deemed to be essential; and although she was particular in enforcing quiet and forbidding conversation, there were times when Reginald would parry her injunctions with a joke, and relieve the monotony of the sick-room by narrations of his past experiences. His favourite theme was Vero, whom he described

as a noble tender fellow; and he was dilating upon instances of his self-sacrifice, which, he said, proved heroic friendship to be no fable, when a note was put into Lady Agramont's hand, reminding her that the hour for the arrival of the surgeons was at hand. But there was no need to remind her, and she sat with well-feigned composure listening to his remembrances of friends, and thinking they seemed like portents of a final parting, until the sound of footsteps outside the door of the room caused her to change colour. As the doctors entered, a cold, creeping sensation came over her, and at the sight of Lord Agramont, who was with them, she gave an appealing look, as if in deprecation of the tragedy about to be enacted; but the head surgeon's business-like request, that they might be left alone for a short time, brought her to herself, and with passive obedience she rose to leave the room.

Reginald followed her with his eye; and seeing a tender expression on his face, as if he wished to say something, she stooped over him.

'There is a clear sky above,' he said, encouragingly. 'I shall keep my eye fixed there.'

Lord Agramont gave his wife his arm, and gently led her from the room.

'Stay as near to him as they will let you,' was her pleading request.

'I do not expect you will be excluded for more than a few minutes,' was the husband's encouraging rejoinder.

May, after lingering behind for a time, joined her mamma; but as she found her sitting with her head buried in her hands, her whole attitude showing that her nerves were in a state of extreme tension, she stood hesitating as to how best to dispose of herself, and then went into the hall, in the hope of catching

some sound from the sick-room. All was still—to her awfully so: the dull monotonous passages, so large, so exactly alike, so entirely void of interest, did not prove pleasant lounging-places, and she was glad to creep back to the room, where a few articles of personal use gave a more home-like aspect of things. Lady Agramont had not moved, and feeling the silence oppressive, she sat down at her feet, and placing her arm on her lap, thereby invited notice. This called forth a fondling gesture; and thus emboldened, she laid down her head, and sat still for a time, then hesitatingly ventured the question,

'Mamma, do you know a Chinese proverb to this effect — I don't quite remember the words: "When men are at their ease, they burn no incense; but when trouble comes, they clasp the feet of Fo"?'

'I have never heard it before, love, but I readily recognize its truth. Although a Pagan experience, it will apply very generally,' replied Lady Agramont, altering her position. 'It would be joy indeed if I could hope that our united prayers have been ascending to God for help in this trial,' she added, questioningly.

May was silent: if she could have satisfied her mamma, she would have been too shy to do so; but she did not know how to answer truthfully, and she sat silently pressing her head more affectionately on to her mother's lap, and wondering if the hope that God would help them, and the fear that He would not do so, could be called prayer, then said,

'Frances has told me that Helen thinks it right to tell God even her little troubles.'

'I should have supposed so. There is an expression on her face that only those have who live near to God,' said Lady Agramont, absently.

'I should feel it to be taking a liberty to trouble a Being so

great as God with the little things some people seem to speak to Him about,' returned May. 'I don't mean this is a little thing,' she added quickly, her eyes filling and her colour rising.

'Then we may ask Him to help us now,' said Lady Agramont, as if wishing to be quiet. Had her heart been a little less full, she would have reminded May, how in everything we are taught to make known our requests unto God; but she was still silent, and there was a pause.

May sat very still, thinking, and calling to remembrance the fact that all whom she had most loved and trusted,—her mamma, her aunt, her brother, Helen,—were praying people, until her reflections were interrupted by the entrance of Lord Agramont, accompanied by Dr. Worthington, who, in answer to an eager look of inquiry, turned to her mamma, and said,

'I believe we have been entirely successful, and without amputating the limb, my dear lady, we have reason to hope that your son's fine constitution, and may I add, his fine mind, will help him through. Our worst enemy is fever,—that we must guard against most vigilantly. I advise that he remain under the care of the nurse I have selected for the present, and after a little, a quiet cheerful friend will be of great service.' He looked admiringly at May, and added, 'You shall see him presently for a minute, but only for a minute.'

May felt as if she could embrace the doctor out of pure gratitude, while the bright spot on Lady Agramont's cheek testified to the intensity of her feeling. She shook hands with the kind surgeon, and then retired, feeling the joyous reaction to be more prostrating in its effect than even the suspense had been.

With May it was less so. Although when she went to look after her mamma traces of tears were visible on her countenance, she said, brightly,

'I suppose we've been crying for joy and for sympathy—Helen and I, I mean—or for some such unreasonable reason. Lord Agramont had told Helen the time of the operation, and she drove over to hear the result. Captain Drummond rode by the side of the carriage, so that I had the pleasure of communicating the good news to both of them. I don't think I ever saw Helen look so nice.' Helen had been closeted, pleading for the life of Reginald Bosanquet, under the delusion that she was praying for those who had a right to love him, but, in fact, she had been praying for herself. Perhaps the look of gratitude that manifested itself on hearing that her petition had been granted, had been the look May so much admired. 'I think she was going to send you a message, but that she changed her mind, knowing that you would understand how glad she is, and that expressions of sympathy are unsatisfactory both to the people sending them and to those to whom they are sent. She proposed my joining them in some lessons. She was determined Frances should not lose her time, and asked Lord Agramont if she might have masters for her.'

'It would be a good opportunity for you,' returned Lady Agramont, absently.

And she went to her son's room, to find him tranquilly sleeping under the influence of a narcotic; but he looked so very ill, a mere shadow of his former self, that she saw the necessity of restraining her joy, and bringing her mind into a state of resignation to whatever might be God's will.

CHAPTER XXIX.

'We'll hear the will!'

A FEW weeks having elapsed from the time of the operation, Lady Agramont had the satisfaction of dispensing with the professional nurse, and of having her son more under her own care. It was a great delight too to May to be allowed free access to the sick-room, for the solemn, dignified restrictions of the attendant lately in office had effectually prevented any undue trespass on her domain; and Reginald and she had passed many a joke on the effective qualifications of his keeper, jailer, custodian, or sentry, as they used in turn facetiously to call her.

Very soon after she left, the invalid was pronounced to be in a fit state to take carriage exercise; and very acceptable was the permission; for although everything had been done that could be done to render his sick-room cheerful, the aids to cheerfulness in an hotel in London are but scant, and must come from within rather than without; so that all were hopeful of the good to be derived from clear air and sunshine.

The palace at Sydenham was at that time a novelty: Reginald had not seen it, and after two or three experimental trials as to how far he could go, Lady Agramont said that they would make that their morning drive.

The sight of the outside of the then novel-looking building awoke a curiosity to see the interior, and she proposed that one of the invalid-chairs should be brought out, and that he should be wheeled round the side courts.

At first he objected on the score of publicity; but, on being informed that the visitors generally kept to the nave and transepts, that objection was overruled, and he yielded to the proposition.

They had not been long in the palace before May's attention was attracted by the party of East Indians whom they had met at the hotel on Lake Windermere. They appeared to be looking at something or some one that especially interested them, and, following the direction of their glances, she saw the whole Drummond party in the distance, accompanied by Helen and Frances, and, delighted at the rencontre, she was going to run forward to meet them, when a look at her brother's face checked her.

'Can't we avoid them?' he asked, uneasily. 'I 'm not feeling equal to cope with strangers—I 'm not a match for gay spirits.'

'You were not going to play skulk, Bosanquet?' said Vero a minute afterwards, in a voice that would do any one's heart good.

'I knew *you* would trust me,' returned Reginald, shaking him warmly by the hand.

'I must have a word with your mother,' said Lady Agramont, emulating her son in the geniality of her welcome.

'She wouldn't come forward, seeing you wished to avoid us,' exclaimed Vero.

And he gave his arm to Lady Agramont, and led her to where the group of girls and children were standing.

'That East Indian watches Helen just as I once saw a bird watching a gnat he wanted to catch,' said May, when she was

alone with her brother. 'He supplied her with a paper she wished for at the time the news reached England of the entry of the allies into Sebastapol, and I suppose he thinks that that entitles him to a recognition.'

'Has Miss Douglas any friends in the Crimea?' asked Reginald.

'I think not. I believe she has been interested more upon mamma's account, and mine, than on her own. And Captain Drummond, too, was out there then. She is my *beau ideal* of a graceful young queen,' she added, as Helen walked to meet her mamma. 'Both she and Frances are unique in their different styles. I want you to know them.'

'Mrs. Drummond asks for a word with you,' said Lady Agramont to her son, as, with that lady, she neared the place where they stood. 'I tell the girls they must wait for another opportunity.'

Reginald raised his hat, and looked animated and pleased; but his countenance fell as he glanced towards the *posse* of girls, who, in spite of his mother's proposal that they should wait, were come forward expecting an introduction. Lady Agramont pointedly introduced Helen and Frances, upon which Reginald merely repeated the previous ceremony, without giving any distinct recognition to either, and the young people wandered away, leaving Mrs. Drummond to follow with Vero.

'I heard that gentleman propose to the lady who is with him to walk back, that they might have another look at Helen,' said May to her mamma when they were alone again.

'I too have heard people remarking on her,' said Lady Agramont. 'I think her very simple style of dress attracts notice.'

'And then there's something in her gait "gars ony dress look weel,"' said May, appreciatively.

'I 've come as a deputation from the united families of Drummond and Douglas, to solicit the favour of Miss Shelley's company for the remainder of the day,' said Vero, just as Lady Agramont's carriage was about to drive away. 'I think you have appropriated her of late,' he added, addressing Reginald. 'Be good-natured for once, and use your influence on our behalf.'

Reginald was warm in his wish that May should accept the invitation, and as Lady Agramont made no objection, she not unwillingly strolled back through the palace with Vero.

When they reached their party, she at once possessed herself of Helen, saying that she had not had a talk with her for a long time; but Helen seemed disinclined to be responsive, and May had to persevere before she could coax her out of herself.

'I am so charmed with those little Drummonds,' said Helen, at last. 'One of them has just told me quite seriously that the fish would be sure to come if their brother wanted them; that everybody loved Vero; that even the wasps would not sting him.'

'I never knew that insects were so discerning, or capable of affectionate impressions,' said May, disappointed that Helen could not find a home subject on which to discuss. 'How do you think Reginald is looking?'

'I hardly saw him,' returned Helen, who, recurring abruptly to the old subject, remarked, 'If you can engage Captain Drummond in conversation, he is really very interesting—he seems very much improved.'

'I didn't know he wanted improving,' returned May, surprised at her cool way of speaking of her favourite, the warm blood mounting to her cheek; 'I 've no doubt he would appreciate so condescending an opinion, especially if he happened to know that it was not your way to be prodigal of praise.'

'Do not mistake me,' pleaded Helen, annoyed that her remark should have been taken up as May had taken it. 'I used to think that he talked too much nonsense, and indulged his taste for satire too freely, without regarding any other counsellor but his own humour. It was the remembrance of that only that suggested my remark.'

'That was one thing I liked him for,' said May, somewhat perversely; 'he was the one that caused all the fun.'

'He always chose clergymen as subjects of attack,' continued Helen; 'and it seemed to me that, in their case, his judgment should have been tempered with veneration, if not for the men themselves, for their office.'

'It was because he so abhored that which isn't true,' said May, warmly. 'I never heard him ridicule genuine religion, and I do not think you ever did. It was only Mr. Harrison he attacked; and it is a dreadful infliction to sit and hear any one preach what you believe they do not even try to practise. I can imagine it to be especially disagreeable to him.

'I am sure he did not mean harm, but it is a treacherous gift to be able to exaggerate people's foibles as he does,' returned Helen.

'A very amusing one,' said May. 'You do give him credit for *meaning* well then?' she added, with satirical emphasis.

'You are wilfully misunderstanding me,' said Helen, 'for while I do not think it expedient or right to expose people's weaknesses merely for our own amusement, I can in the case in point not only sympathize in the temptation, but see how great was the provocation.'

'When he hears him denouncing a want of liberality in other people, a want he is much given to dilate upon, can you not imagine how Captain Drummond would long to turn the mirror

upon himself?' asked May. 'If people throw stones in their neighbour's garden, they ought to be prepared to take as well as give. Clergymen have it all their own way in the pulpit.'

'Perhaps he sees the necessity of inculcating the virtues in which he feels himself most deficient,' said Helen, smiling. 'You must remember that Captain Drummond's clever sarcasm does not reach Mr. Harrison's ears, but the ears of many who are looking to him for an example; and it is doubtful, to say the least of it, if harm is not done to the cause of religion by one professing Christian bringing into prominence the failings of another. I am still of opinion that he would do wiser to be quiet on the subject.'

'People are expected to be able to distinguish between real religion and its sham,' said May, with decision. 'If they can't, they may see it exemplified in the very two men under review, Mr. Harrison being just the reverse of Captain Drummond, who in faith, fairness, trustiness, and all the higher virtues, exemplifies the graces Mr. Harrison only preaches. The one lays himself out for the happiness of his fellows, while the other has a soul entirely contracted and wrapped up in self. You should hear Reginald speak of Captain Drummond; he says he is one of the finest fellows in the world; and I can quite believe he does not need an apologist for his conduct.

'"His eye, e'en turned on empty space,
Beams keen with honour,"'

she added, enthusiastically, entirely forgetting her maidenly reticence, as her heart rose spontaneously in admiration of the qualities which her brother had represented as shining so brightly in his friend's character. 'I am sure you ought to thank me for so candid an appreciation of his good qualities.'

Without recognizing the grounds of her obligation to May, Helen remarked,

'I believe the indignation of which I complained as being too freely expressed, arose from sympathy with Mr. Harrington, who has, I know, suffered for years from the rector's obstinacy, miserliness, and idleness.'

'There 's a point in proof,' said May, triumphantly: 'his love for Mr. Harrington is a test of his appreciation of what is really good.'

'We think we have allowed you time for an unreasonably lengthy chat,' said Gertrude, coming up to the spot where they sat. 'The children are not inclined to move from the statue of Sabrina until you have seen it, they say it is so like May. I want you to see the one of Satan: it is a good ideal of a fallen angel.'

'Helen has been coaxing me into reading Milton,' returned May; 'but I am afraid I have not capacity to appreciate it. I agree with the old doctor,' pointing to a portly figure of Dr. Johnson, 'that if one lays down a volume of Milton, one might forget to take it up again.'

'There is a great deal in getting accustomed to the measure,' said Helen. 'When once you have done that, you discover a majesty in it that you do not find in any other poet.'

Vero watched them in animated conversation, and would fain have made one of their party; but he had his mother on his arm, and he was obliged to content himself with watching May at a distance, and with looking forward to a seat in the carriage with her on their way home. But, greatly to his annoyance, the children coaxed her into going in the waggonette with them; in consequence of which arrangement, he had little conversation with her until dinner-time, when she sat next him, and was very bright and amusing. The effusion which seemed to him to come

warmest from her heart, was an answer she gave to a remark he made in praise of the Lees. Knowing how pleasant it is to have one's friends appreciated, she made a point of showing her agreement in what she knew to be his taste. Had Vero overheard her defence of himself a few hours before, he would have gone to rest in a happier mood.

Early in the evening Lord Agramont sent for her, and she was soon in what were then her home quarters. On inquiring after Reginald, she learned that he was engaged with a man who had called on him several times during his illness, but who had invariably been sent away, owing to his refusing to send up either his name or a message. Supposing him to be on a begging errand, the servants had said that Captain Bosanquet was too ill to see any one; but this time he had happened to catch Reginald in the hall.

'It is sure to be Vincent,' exclaimed May, excitedly.

She went at once to her brother's room, where she found her suspicion verified, and going forward, she shook hands with the man, who had always been an especial favourite with her from her childhood.

After inquiring of him particulars of Sir Lionel's illness and death, she asked how it happened that William Bryant was in Rome.

'That's more than I can tell, Miss,' said the man. 'All I know is, that he didn't ought to have been there, but that he took master aback by suddenly making his appearance at the hotel where we was staying. I never had the best opinion of the young man, as you know, and did all I could to keep him away; but he wheedled himself so much into favour that at last the master wasn't happy without him. I never felt satisfied that he wasn't up to something as he shouldn't be, but did not

think anything partikler irreg'lar was going on, until one day when I had left master's room a little longer than usual, when I come back I found not only Mr. Bryant, but two or three of them long-coated gentlemen in there. Maybe I mightn't have taken any account of that, if it hadn't been that they all looked guilty like, and spoke as if they weren't up to what they were saying, besides being a vast deal too polite to me. I somehow took it into my head, then and there, that they'd been making poor master sign a will; and I was right, sir and Miss; for no sooner had they got out of the room than the master said, says he, "Vincent," says he, "I believe they've got it all; I don't think they'll let my fairy have even enough to live on." '

May was distressed at words that brought the past so vividly to her remembrance, and would have left the room; but the man asked her to stay, as he had something important to tell her.

'"I meant to have remembered you too," said the master, "but they wouldn't let me—that is, to the best of my recollection. They did read it to me, but I couldn't hear what it was they said." Then he went on fretting, fretting in a way that I didn't like to see; and maybe the thought of something comfortable for my old age touched me up a bit; but be that as it was, I took upon myself to speak to two English gentlemen — (we servants have a way of knowing who's who, and I took care that they were gentlemen)—and I told them just how things stood. They saw the thing with half an eye; and to cut the matter short, they talked to master, and had a fresh will made in the presence of myself, a lawyer, and their two selves. At first he left Miss his sole heiress, but he didn't seem happy, and kept the notary waiting before he would sign it. He said there would be no one to take care of her interest, and that

they had so set their minds on the Warren, that he felt sure they would have it if it were left to her. I knew there was no time to be lost, and, in my flurry, I said, says I, "Why not leave it to the gentleman, Miss May's brother, and the other property to the young lady, and then there will be some one to look after it all?" It was a bold stroke, and maybe you 'll think I 've done wrong by you, Miss,' turning to May, 'but it was a case of now or never. The master took to my proposal wonderful, and ordered the will to be made according. He put great trust in them as signed, and it was all settled off as it should be.'

Reginald's expression was thoughtful, and he said,

'There can be but one feeling as to your kind intentions, to say nothing of good services, my good friend,—under any circumstances you shall be rewarded.'

'There it is, then, sir, signed and sealed,' said the man, throwing a packet on the table. 'I promised my master on my oath that it should not go out of my hands until I put it into yours, and I 've kept my word.'

Reginald inquired why he had been so long returning to England.

'Sickness, sir: there 's nothing else would have kept me. After my poor master died, I was taken bad with fever; and when I was recovering, Mr. Bryant sent for me: he was laid by of the same illness, and I found him very low and downcast like. He says to me, "Vincent," he says, "you might as well stick by a fellow in his trouble; I don't much relish being left to the mercy of these Italian chaps. If they had known what they were about, they would have cured me long ago; and I 've a presentiment that if I 'm left to them, they 'll kill me." I saw the poor mortal was next to death's door, and, as his fellow-countryman, I made up my mind to stand by him;

but I thought, thinks I, I 'll make him pay me for my services. So I made answer, "Stay with you I will, Mr. Bryant, and do the best I can by you, if you behave like a Christian and a gentleman, but only on that condition. I tell you plainly it 's no partikler consequence whether you do what I 'm going to ask you to do, or don't do it; for I 've got my master's will signed and sealed as right as right can be; but I should like my young mistress to see in black and white, that Sir Lionel had no mind to oust her out of her old home. Now, that there will as you 've got, was got through some jugglery, either of yours or them there Papists, and you know it; and my conditions is, that you put your signature to something I 'll get wrote, which will make the whole thing clear to her." He looked very much astonished, then ashamed and foolish like, then turned sulky and wouldn't speak; so I went away; and when I went to him again, I had the paper ready with me. He looked glad to see me, and said it was frightfully lonely like, lying, as he was, in a strange house. By degrees he grew confidential, and told me that from the first day he saw her, he had set his thoughts on marrying Miss May, and that Sir Lionel, who must have guessed his hopes, did not discourage them; that when he saw there was no chance of marrying her of her own free will, and that Sir Lionel was about to take her away, he determined that, if he could not get her, he would get the money he would have had with her, either for himself or his Church, and that there were plenty in Rome to lend him a helping hand. "This is what you 'd call buying your soul of the devil, isn't it?" he added, half jestingly, but bitter like too: "my Church tells me it is the way to get to heaven to fill its coffers, no matter how." My belief, sir, is that he set no store by his Church. I felt right down sorry to see a fellow-being with no better sense of right and wrong;

and I said, says I, "Mr. Bryant, no good never come to nobody, either in this world or the next, through wrong-doing; to do justice is the way to get mercy, and now here's a chance for you. This paper says that the will you witnessed is what is called a moral forgery," quoting the words of the gentleman who had written out the paper, "and that it was Sir Lionel's wish that Miss May should be his heiress."

'But for all I could say he wouldn't do it then, and turned sulky again. He got worse during the day, and grew penitent like, and I coaxed him a bit, and says I, "There's nothing like making a clean breast of it: do what I ask you, Mr. Bryant; you won't repent it." At last he said, says he, "Well, I begin to think it is a foul one at present, Vincent." He was always good-natured to me. He spoke very weak, but I listened, and he made his confession. "The fact is," says he, "I was so dead set upon having Miss May, that I didn't mind what dirty tricks I did to get her. I had once heard my father say, when he was in a passion with Sir Lionel, that he knew a thing or two about him, that would make his hair stand on end if he should publish it to the world, and I was coward enough to pretend to be a sharer in the secret; and when I found out that a reference to it made the old fellow nervous, I kept the threat that I knew that there was some circumstance in his life, of which he was by no means proud, suspended over him like the sword of Damocles, ready to come down upon him if he offended me, although I was as ignorant of the facts of the case as you are." "That was a coward's trick, and no mistake," says I. "I heerd that it was that there affair with the gun that used to trouble him, and something about the election." "They all served their purpose," says he. "I 'm sorry for you sir," says I, "and hope you 're sorry for it yourself. One would be ashamed to serve

one's enemy so, much less a good friend, such as the master was to you." "He ought to have stood up for himself," says he, as if he wanted to find some excuse. "And you ought to have stood up for him, sir," says I. "There 's honour among thieves, they say, and one looks for it 'twixt gentlemen." He put out his hand, and shook hands, and says, "I suppose I 'd better do it." "There 's no mistake about that, sir," says I; and I got him the ink, and he signed the paper, and there it is, his own confession that the first will wasn't a true will.'

May was in tears: perhaps she was weeping over the sins of a fellow-creature, so sad is it to hear of any one being so entirely devoid of all generous or even respectable feeling.

Reginald looked grave and somewhat troubled, and asked if Bryant saw a priest.

'No, sir. It 's my belief that he wouldn't have been as peaceable as he was if they gentlemen had known where he was; but his having been took with the fever just as he was returning to England saved him their company. No one seemed to know he was in Rome.'

'You did all you could for him?' asked May.

'That I did, as if he were my own brother.'

'Do I understand he died of the fever?' asked Reginald.

'He did not, sir, through the mercy of God. But I hope I was the means of enlightening him a bit. I thought he was dying, and he saw I did, and listened to what I had to say, although he didn't seem to set much store by religion of any sort; but you see, sir, I 'd had some experience with my poor master. Before he died he had a craving for something out of the Bible, and asked me to read to him. I didn't justly know where to hit upon the right words; and he said something about poor Miss Camilla being able to tell me where to find what

he'd like to hear, and told me to read straight through the Book of Psalms until I came to something. These seemed to satisfy him; and when I came to the fifty-first, he made me read it again and again, and followed me as if he were praying.'

'And you offered Bryant the same consolation?' asked Reginald, bringing him back to where he had lost himself.

'I did, sir; and some of the words seemed to touch him up —them about falling into a pit that he had digged for another, the fifteenth Psalm, and some others.'

Reginald knew that his sister was being subjected to too great a trial, and said,

'It is evident we are greatly indebted to you.'

'That did seem like a case of falling into the pit that he had digged for another,' said the man, thoughtfully.

'We will leave all judgment to God,' said Reginald. 'Many thanks for the friendly part you have taken in the matter.'

May seconded her brother's thanks, and saying that she hoped soon to see him again, followed him out of the room. What became of Bryant was her parting question.

'He told me he should not return to Scotswood, but I never heard anything more,' returned Vincent.

May did not wish to see any one else that night, but the next day she was sitting talking over affairs with her brother, he urging her claim to Sir Lionel's entire fortune, and she steadily refusing to accept it, when Lord Agramont joined them, and remarked,

'I've just said good day to the whole Drummond and Douglas party. Helen allowed me to take her to give directions as to the re-setting of her mother's jewels, after an intimation that I intended she should be presented next year; but she is more indifferent about such things than ladies generally. I have

no doubt think she has gone to the abbey, thinking it would be more pleasant for us to find the house looking occupied on our return.'

'I suppose she feels independent of jewels,' said May. 'Has she really taken flight in that fashion?' she added, indignantly. 'I think the Drummonds would like to have her all to themselves.'

'The old admiral told me he should have paid you a visit if he had been sure he should have gained admission to you in his Dutch galliots, as he calls his slippers,' said Lord Agramont.

May laughed at the characteristic speech, and said,

'Of course Captain Drummond's gone?'

'He goes to the palace to night; our excellent Lady Queen seems determined to make much of her soldiers.'

'She doesn't seem to forget any one,' said May.

CHAPTER XXX.

'I've lock'd my heart in a case of gowd,
And pinn'd it wi' a siller pin.'

HELEN is again in her own room at the abbey—a room in which, in days gone by, she had experienced many a heart struggle. She had met the hero of her girlish dreams, and he had not even recognized her! Confessing to some disappointment, she blamed herself for the weakness she thus acknowledged, and resolved that henceforth, in this case at least, she would 'bring herself into subjection to her will.' Previous experience served as a warning to her. She remembered how enfeebling had been the effects of allowing her thoughts to dwell much on one subject—how it had rendered her less capable of useful work; and after a stern determination never again to relax the discipline the heart needs to keep it from running truant, she felt fortified against further disappointment. True, she would rather not have had to meet Reginald in the family circle; but if she cherished the resolution she had formed, even his presence would not impair her peace. Such were her reflections as she performed her toilet on the first evening of her return home; and doubtless those experienced in like circumstances will pronounce her philoso-

phical determination to be as practical as it was praiseworthy; but if, perchance, they should have found law and logic to be ineffective in such a contingency, they may better understand how an appeal for Almighty aid was a more certain method of obtaining tranquillity, and how she would find an antidote from care in a settled trust that she was secure in the keeping of a Friend who had the whole disposal of events under His control.

The whetting of a scythe awoke her early the next morning. It was a sound to which she had been accustomed from her childhood, and brought the long past vividly to her remembrance. Her childish days seemed very far in the past, for she did not feel even a girl now, but a woman, with a woman's cares and a woman's responsibilities.

Determining that it was her duty, gratefully to accept the means of happiness at her disposal, and not to waste her spirit in longings after what was unattainable, she became light hearted on principle, and went down stairs to begin her day's work with a feeling that her life's prospect was a bright one, but that her chief happiness must arise from herself. She had learned to be suspicious of the profitableness of work where no self-sacrifice was involved; and thinking of the testimonials of approbation she used to receive for her diligence and proficiency in her studies, determined by a different kind of work to try to gain higher commendation; and instead of devoting the morning to her books, as she was inclined, she cast about to find something to do that would be useful to others. Her eye happened to fall on a note from Margaret Lee, asking for her co-operation and judgment in some matter connected with the schools, and she at once decided upon having an interview with her, and seeing in what way she could be of use. It called her self-denial into exercise to act upon this resolve, for a morning

spent with Miss Lee did not promise much entertainment to Helen. Excellent as was Margaret, she was in the habit, when in the presence of those she considered her intellectual superiors, of entirely sinking her own opinions, and simply following the lead; and as Helen knew her to be far more mistress of the circumstances about which they were going to consult than she was, she felt that the interview was likely to be troublesome and unsatisfactory; but these considerations not being sufficient to deter her from her purpose, she set off on her errand.

As she was crossing the park with her sister, old Roger Danes went up to them, and presented them each with a letter. There was no apparent reason why he should have gone out of his beat to deliver them himself, but perhaps he had a recollection of a former occasion, when he had discovered himself to be a welcome messenger, and it was by no means unnatural for an old man to feel gratified in giving pleasure to two such girls as Helen and Frances Douglas.

'Mine is from Miss Aberley!' exclaimed Frances as she broke the seal. 'I guess yours is from Dr. Milman.'

And for a time they were intent on their respective epistles.

The intelligence contained in Frances' was that Miss Aberley had arrived in England with her brother's children, who had come over for education, and that she was going to take a house of her own. Upon hearing which, Helen remarked, thoughtfully,

'Then under any circumstances she would not have returned to us. I am glad it has happened so.'

'If only we could find her a house at Croyland!' returned Frances, enthusiastically. 'Tell me about Dr. Milman.'

'He writes especially to ask us to try to do something for

Pierre Moreau. He says that the man's conduct generally—I mean, subsequent to our introduction to him—has been most satisfactory, and that he is very anxious to establish himself as a respectable member of society; but that owing to his antecedents, he finds great difficulty in getting employment. 'You may read the letter.'

Looking pleased at the permission, Frances read, and returning it, said,

'I hope you will be able to do what he wishes. I think you will, as he says you may mention it to Lord Agramont, although you are not to trouble him.'

The doctor never closed a letter without saying something stimulating in its tendency, something to urge them to cultivate the spirit and tenour of manners inculcated by the Gospel. And they reached the school ready for any kind service that might be required of them; looking so sweet and amiable as to cause Margaret to wonder how she could ever have thought Helen's expression haughty.

After apologizing for troubling them, Miss Lee explained that the schoolmistress had been ill for several weeks, and that, except for the help she could render, the girls must all be kept idle. She was then engaged on some heavy, uninviting work, and Helen asked compassionately if temporary assistance could not be obtained. Finding that the neighbourhood had been searched in vain for such help, she suggested that she and Frances should give up an hour of their time each morning, and began handling the material on the table, to discover upon what they had better begin.

'It requires a great deal of preparation, and is not of a most enticing description,' said Margaret, selecting some of the least complicated garments from among the mass; and then, feeling

diffident at applying what she considered Helen's great powers of mind to so homely a task, she added,

'I think I could get through it, but I do not like to keep the girls waiting. It is the needlework they do that induces their parents to send them to school.'

Helen persisted,—cheerfully put herself under direction, and was soon busy turning down hems and fitting seams, although not without many a misgiving that she was wasting her time in doing what a sempstress could do with much less labour. It happened, however, that the doctor had warned her in his letter against waiting for great occasions of serving God, and had bade her remember that under the Law, those who had not a lamb to offer in sacrifice were welcome with a pair of pigeons; so that this thought tended to reconcile her, and she went steadily on; her mind working faster than her fingers, thinking that when she began to teach she would have a more exalted occupation; that if she could induce only one child to do right, from the simple wish to please God, she would be doing something worth the doing. She felt humiliated, however, by comparing the avidity with which she had seized upon the hope of doing something that would please Dr. Milman, with the spiritless way in which she was performing such service as God has promised to accept as done unto Himself, and sat for a time without speaking.

Work was going on very diligently, Margaret becoming more and more enamoured of her quiet helps, when Robert Lee broke the silence by opening the door of the school-room. Margaret went forward to meet him. He had been to town for a few days, and his return was unexpected. With a ceremonious greeting to Helen and Frances, he was about to retire, but upon his sister asking anxiously if anything particular had altered his plans, he went forward into the room.

'Something of a very distressing kind has happened,' he replied, 'but I can't enter upon it now. Nothing of a private nature,' he added, reassuringly.

'Can't you tell us now?' asked Margaret.

'I should have to begin after the way of story tellers, to give you an idea of the occurrence as it happened,' returned Robert, not sorry for an excuse to see some of the party from the abbey.

'That would be all the nicer,' said Frances, who was an old pet of his, 'if it is not about something that only Margaret ought to hear.'

This was a sufficient invitation, and, seating himself across one of the forms, and playing with a garment that was used as a pattern for the children's work, he told his tale.

'You know that when I am in London I always feel as restless as a toad under a harrow; and one morning, not knowing how to dispose of myself, I boarded a Gravesend steamer and went down the river. Having arrived at my destination, the dust and fishy smells soon set me longing to be off again, and seeing a little boat about to cross to Tilbury Fort, I jumped into it. At first I was the sole passenger in the stern of the boat, but two privates sat in the bow; afterwards a few labourers joined them, and the signal had been given for departure, when a shrill cracked cry caused the captain to telegraph to the engineer and to sign that a lady wanted to come on board. As the only female she was naturally the object of mark, and so far interested me that I remember the dress she wore. It was a brown gown of some woollen material, a straw bonnet without any fringe, and a black mantelet with embroidered arm-holes.'

A merry laugh from Frances at his unorthodox description of a lady's dress stopped him for a minute, then he continued:

'A green veil drawn close down over her face hid her fea-

tures; but something in her figure, and a stray curl of hair, seemed familiar to me. I could not gratify my curiosity as to who she was, for she went at once to the bow of the boat, and planted herself like a stock before the soldiers. They evidently felt the awkwardness the lady might be supposed to feel in such a position, and, after a shy glance at me, turned their faces over the boat's side and looked into the water. Nothing daunted, the lady—for, in spite of her strange proceedings, there was an unmistakable lady-look about her—pushed herself into a seat between them, and, apparently unconscious of anything peculiar in her movements, turned from one to the other, making remarks they did not appear to understand. In another moment we had reached the landing-place, and the soldiers, glad to escape, sprang from the boat, joking at what seemed to them a fit subject for merriment. Their light manner evidently displeased her, for after standing a moment on deck watching them, she sharply announced that she should complain to Her Majesty of the bad conduct of her soldiers, then landed, and set off at a rapid pace down one of the country lanes. As she left the boat the wind blew aside her veil, and I saw a face I felt I ought to know. I remembered afterwards it was Miss de Febvre, the lady who lives at Dr. Coleridge's.'

The girls looked aghast.

'What did you do?' inquired Margaret.

'Tried to follow her, but unsuccessfully, and I came home to make my report to the doctor. He has now gone in search of her. He says she has always been odd, that she has let her mind run entirely to waste, and has had, particularly of late, so overwhelming an opinion of her own powers as not to be amenable to control. You will not repeat this. Perhaps it would have been better for me not to have mentioned it; but I believe

the fact of her head being turned on some points is no longer a secret.' And he looked to Helen to confirm his supposition.

'I heard of something of the sort, but not of anything I considered so serious,' returned Helen.

'Miss Coleridge used to say she would get bewildered,' said Frances, with difficulty repressing her tears.

'I never once saw her employing herself,' rejoined Margaret. 'I have often wondered what would be the end of an existence so entirely without an aim.'

Robert's intelligence had cast a cloud over them all; and, making arrangements to attend again on the morrow, the girls from the abbey set off on their return.

Luncheon over, Helen put her sister in the way of passing her time profitably, and after seeing that everything was in a state of pleasant readiness for the home-coming of the heads of the household, sat down to write to Dr. Milman, intending to close her letter after she had spoken to Lord Agramont about Pierre. She had just finished, when the noise of carriage wheels announced the expected arrivals, and sent her out into the hall.

'I hope you have been in a state of penitential vigour ever since you left London,' exclaimed May, warmly embracing her. 'How queer of you to go without a word of farewell! Reginald, this is Helen: I am so glad you will know each other.'

Reginald raised his hat, then shook hands with her.

'I do not deserve scolding as much as you may imagine,' she replied. 'Our return was not premeditated, and I had seen you only the day before.'

She spoke merrily. She was glad to have May home again, about whom there was a sparkle that communicated itself, and seemed to enliven not only the inmates of the abbey, but the grim old building itself.

'Now we are all together,' said May, with satisfaction. And she went on talking with Helen, while Lady Agramont followed her son to his rooms.

After a while Frances paired off with May, and Helen had Lord Agramont all to herself. This was a good opportunity to introduce Pierre's need, and ere the other ladies returned she had shown him Dr. Milman's note, and put him in full possession of the facts of the case. Before she closed her letter she had the pleasure of telling her old friend that although no ready way of help occurred to her guardian, he had promised to set the case aside among those to be thought of. It would be a great pleasure to her to be able to forward the doctor's wishes; for, while fully aware of the impossibility of discharging the debt she owed him, now made especially manifest, as she contrasted her present happy relations with Lord Agramont, to the subdued care-for-nothing feelings that had been hers before the doctor had pointed out to her the part she ought to take towards effecting a better understanding—she felt it not only a delight, but a bounden duty to do what she could by way of acknowledgment.

Reginald kept his own room until dinner, but at that meal the whole family party met.

May was in high spirits, and gave expression to her ecstasy in having her brother with them, in a way that made Helen feel she was not of kin; but on Lord Agramont leading the conversation to general topics, she took her full share in it, and appreciated the clever and kind way he had of setting every one at ease. Entirely master of himself, his mind unruffled and self-possessed, he was, by intuition, a leader of others; and it was a study to observe how skilfully he directed the discourse, so that each one present took a proper share in it; any one might discover that there was a master mind as well as a master at the

head of the table. Helen soon forgot her own anxieties while he led her on to talk.

The expected arrival of Miss Aberley, the want of a schoolmistress, and Mr. Harrington being overworked, were some of the topics she had to bring forward; and after hearing what she had to say, Lord Agramont replied,

'I have it in my mind to work, if not to overwork, you. After the cottages are finished, and our village is as near a model as we can make it, I mean to build a church and parsonage; and, as you have proved yourself so efficient as an honorary architect, to enlist you in my service.'

Helen smiled.

'I do not intend to accept your services quite gratuitously,' he added, as he felt how ready she was to do as he wished, 'but to place the gift of the incumbency in your hands by way of return.'

Helen coloured with pleasure.

Reginald looked at her.

'I hope she will give it to Mr. Harrington,' whispered Frances as they all rose to leave the table.

'How delightful to be able to offer a parsonage to some nice young lovers, who are waiting to be married because they haven't a house to live in!' said May, who was thinking of a hero in one of her tales.

'Or to one who has long submitted to durance vile rather than leave a flock entirely without a shepherd,' said Helen. 'I should like to give it to Mr. Harrington.' And she thought of her girlish wish to see him in a snug parsonage, and smiled complaisantly at finding her wish about to be realized.

No one's wish ran counter to hers, and the general cheerfulness was enhanced by Lord Agramont's announcement.

'If Reginald would stay with us we should be about the hap-

piest party in the world,' exclaimed May, as, on reaching the drawing-room, they seated themselves on low seats by Lady Agramont's sofa. 'How pleased Captain Drummond will be to see Mr. Harrington with a church!'

'And I shall be as pleased to see Miss Aberley,' said Frances. 'Everything is happy.'

'I believe Captain Drummond makes the miseries of the inferior clergy his own,' said May, looking at Helen.

Helen was not inclined to enter upon the subject then, and asked how Alsie had behaved while she had been in town.

'She has been a miracle of propriety—such a model of what ought to be in a waiting-maid, that Reginald was so impertinent as to ask if you had not had something to do with her selection. It was evident that he gave you credit for the greater discrimination of the two, and I was quite affronted.'

'I am glad she is improving,' returned Helen, mentally protesting against a rising colour in her face. 'You know Phœbe is here?'

'She came at my request, because she was a favourite with darling Auntie,' said May. 'I don't like to think of Scotswood as a desolation for the owls and bats,' she added, thoughtfully.

'It was one of the loveliest places I 've ever seen,' said Helen. 'Besides the advantages of situation, it was so beautifully kept.'

Vero made his appearance with the gentlemen, and after a due observance of ceremony to the ladies, said to Reginald,

'You must be a sort of polype for vitality. First I heard of an arm and leg damaged, then the ribs, then an arm again; and yet I now see you as staunch and sound as if no such mutilation had taken place.'

But observing his friend wince at being thus brought into notice, he turned to May, who always met him with interest.

'Have you heard of Lord Agramont's plan about the church?' she asked.

Vero had not heard of it; but on her making it known to him, he exclaimed,

'Capital news it is! I don't know any that could give me greater pleasure. I just saw Harrington listening patiently to some worked-up tale of woe. I believe the people hunt up their grievances directly they see him heave in sight, as my old uncle would express it. And now I'll ask you a question. Do you know who is likely to be mistress at the new parsonage?'

'Is he going to be married?' asked the girls, speaking all at once.

'I don't think it's a secret,' continued Vero, thoughtfully. 'Harrington has just told me that your friend Miss Aberley is an old flame of his, and that she has consented to be Mrs. Harrington.'

'She has only just returned from India,' said Helen, with surprise, her memory recurring a moment after to a passage she had seen transacted from her window, on a never-to-be-forgotten day long ago.

'*L'amour est un flèche*,' returned Vero, quoting Voltaire.

'*L'egoïsme à deux*,' said May, quoting Madame de Staël.

'I hope they will not be so taken up with each other as to prevent me having her all to myself sometimes,' said Frances.

And she settled herself to some employment, and to dream delightfully over the future; while, at Lady Agramont's request, Helen and May sang together; and the young men talked with the easy familiarity peculiar to old and tried friends.

This evening was a specimen of many that followed. Where people have settled and pleasurable home employments, no undue excitement is necessary to their happiness; and Vero

and Reginald afforded just enough of the strange element to give what May called flavour to the family party. The girls were warmly attached to each other, and all were unanimous in their love for and admiration of Lord and Lady Agramont; so that the winter passed felicitously, the evenings being joyous sequences to busy and well-spent days, all agreeing that labour gave relish to pleasure.

CHAPTER XXXI.

'All is best, though we oft doubt
What the unsearchable dispose
Of Highest Wisdom brings about,
And ever best found in the close.'

I HEAR Bosanquet has won his suit,' said Vero, riding up with Lord Agramont. 'I 'm glad he will cast anchor among us.'

'It 's so far satisfactory,' returned the gentleman addressed; 'but he has an uncomfortable feeling that in the court of honour the estate will be pronounced to be his sister's. I believe, however, she would be the last to wish the letter of the will altered. For my part, I advocate letting well alone. The more landed proprietors we have of Bosanquet's stamp the better for the country.'

'It would have been a local nuisance for that fine place to have been turned to ecclesiastical purposes,' remarked Vero: 'I should have hated to have fallen in with those long-gowned ecclesiastics at every turn.'

And as he and Lord Agramont were going different roads, with a frank 'good day' he rode on to the village.

Helen had started thither a short time previously, to look after one of the singing boys, who had the day before been absent from the choir, and was lingering in the cottage, saying a few

words of kindness and encouragement to the little fellow, who was ill, when, on turning to go away, she found a tall figure filling the doorway and stooping as if about to come in. On discovering who was there before him, Reginald, for it was he, changed his mind, and soon after Vero caught sight of him in the distance talking earnestly to Helen, his attitude and gesture evincing the subject under discussion to be one of extreme interest.

That same afternoon May was hastening up stairs, with one shoulder elevated as if she were carrying something that required care, and that she didn't wish to be seen, when Reginald came out of his room, and, tapping her on the shoulder with his gloves, inquired the cause of her turning butler.

'I should think you must require a medicament of some sort to steady your felicity,' she said, mischievously. 'May I ask if every one has been kept equally in the dark with myself as to your ambitious views? This is a merciless beginning, brother! Helen owns to have walked two miles, but upon cross questioning her, I find it must have been six at least, and she is now suffering from over-taxed strength. I am hoping my remedy,' alluding to the glass of wine she carried, 'will alleviate her sufferings; but these maladies require skilful, not to say delicate, treatment.' And, with a serio-comic expression on her face, she passed on to her friend's room.

'Dear May, how unnecessary!' said Helen, on discovering the object of her errand. 'I hope you didn't meet any one.'

'Neither bogey nor black man,' returned May. 'Do drink it! It only wants twenty minutes to dinner, and you look fit for nothing but to lie down and rest.'

'I should like to see your mamma before she leaves her room,' returned Helen, rising. 'Your brother will tell Lord Agramont. —I believe I have a welcome from you.'

When May had given her an assuring kiss, she left her for the performance of her errand.

All were pleased at the projected match, but May mingled mischief with her merriment, and gave it as her opinion that the union of two such lights must cause a conflagration; while she entered into the engagement with warm-hearted enthusiasm, without allowing one selfish consideration as to her brother's gain being her loss. Reginald declared that he could not have anything touched at Scotswood, unless she were there to sanction it, and that if she would not help him out in preparing the Warren for his bride, he should prefer to occupy the Old Park House.

Generously determining to keep all melancholy feeling to herself, and boldly to face what she felt to be a closet skeleton, May expressed herself as ready at any time to accompany him thither, laughingly adding that she felt herself considerably taller since he considered her taste of so much value.

Accordingly, the following day Reginald and she rode over together, but she left her brother in the grounds, preferring to go through her old haunts alone. And, refusing the escort of several servants who volunteered their attendance, she at once made her way to her own room. The shutters were closed, and there was a still, lifeless aspect in the place, anything but cheering. The little brass kettle, from which some water had been mixed with wine for her by her aunt the evening before she left home, still stood where she had left it; the bedding and mattress, the latter of which had been quilted in silk at Sir Lionel's especial desire, were sewn up in linen, and stood in a corner of the room; and she remembered with affectionate regret the friends who had, in times gone by, ordered the room for her reception, and cheered her home-coming by the thoughtfulness displayed in its arrangements; but feeling that the end of her visit would

not be answered if she indulged longer in such memories, she passed into her play-room, and pulling aside the sliding panels which had been arranged to keep her treasures from the dust, recognized many an old and familiar favourite. As her eye rested on one after the other, circumstances before remembered but indistinctly, now recurred forcibly to her mind, and her tears, hitherto held in suspension, fell freely.

Not daring to open her aunt's room lest her grief should become uncontrollable, she went hurriedly through the apartments formerly occupied by the family; and here her sad thoughts underwent a sudden transition, for the varied and multiplied representations of herself so tickled her sense of the ludicrous as to cause her to laugh through her tears.

In one picture she was represented reclining on her leopard's skin settee, lording it haughtily over an array of dolls; in another, nursing a dressed-up kitten; here as a fairy with wings; there as an elfin sprite enveloped in mist; at one end of the room as Una with a lion; at the other as her less mythical self, employed in garlanding Argus. All struck her as the extreme of fantasticality and ridiculousness; and while her spirits were at their flow, she went out in search of her brother.

Intimately appreciating her desire to be alone, he had kept to the garden; and on their way to the house he said,

'There is something upon which I intend to put my veto; that is, any alteration of your rooms. They must remain as they are, except for such additions as you may care to make for yourself.'

'Aunt May's rooms!' was the bright reply, 'where all the little Reginalds and Helens will go for counsel to their discreet relative, and be educated in principles of prudence, politeness, and general propriety!' And as Reginald began to view the

accumulation of treasures, she added, 'The place is so full of small things, I think you will be inclined to fit up a room expressly for a museum. You will have to find a place for one in a lumber-room.'

Reginald did not understand, and she explained herself by introducing him to the grotesque figures that had just excited her merriment. They arranged together that they would live an old maid and bachelor life at the Warren for a time, and settle everything to their mutual taste; but that it was to be after Reginald's return from the north, where he would have to go to look after her interests, and to give orders for the renovation of the Old Park House, which he pronounced as capable of being converted into a gem of its kind, and likely to be very useful as a resting-place in his business journeys. This was only intended for a flying visit, and they were soon back at the abbey again.

'Rena Trelawney has been here,' said Frances, meeting them in the hall, and accompanying May to her room. 'She seems so to want companionship. I am sorry for her,' she continued; 'but she talks in such a queer way, that no one would care to have her with them. After saying that Miss de Febvre was "cranky," and that it was jealousy and disappointment that had turned her brain, she was beginning a long story about her having set her cap at Captain Drummond, and then at Mr. Bryant; but I didn't wait to hear, and turned the conversation by inquiring after her sisters.'

'What of them?' asked May, always remembering her governess's account of their superiority.

'Johnetta has married a militia officer, and the eldest, being jealous at her younger sister having settled first, was found flirting with a footman, and is, in consequence, sent away from

home. I can't think how Rena can talk about it; but she does not seem to feel things as other people would do.'

'Who teaches her?' asked May.

'She told me that Johnetta professed to do so, but that she always got into such a rage with her as to quite bewilder her, and that when she was younger she used to confine her to the school-room to prepare lessons she did not in the least understand.'

'I suppose it was then she used to give her dolls' balls?' said May.

Frances smiled, and then added solemnly,

'May, I think we ought to be very—'

'I think I am,' interrupted May, who felt it contrary to her creed to give public expression to her thankfulness. 'Everything is happening just as I should have planned it had I had the planning.'

Frances knew that, in uttering anything at all seriously, May's heart always went with her words, and she was not altogether dissatisfied with the reply.

'There is one thing I hope will be thought of,' continued May; 'that is, that Dr. Milman be asked to the wedding.'

'Helen is very sure to remember it,' said Frances, smiling. 'But she does not think of marrying yet, does she? I thought that people always had time to get to love each other very, very much, first!'

Here Helen joined them on her way down stairs, and was apprised of the matter under discussion. On hearing the subject of her engagement handled in so matter-of-fact a way, she looked unprepared to respond or to enter upon particulars; but May was always allowed more liberty of speech than was accorded to any one else, and she was so far gracious as to reply

that Lord Agramont had kindly proposed that Dr. Milman should be invited on the occasion, and that Annie should accompany him.

'Dear child! she will be delighted to see us again,' she added.

'The "dear child" is just six months younger than Frances,' said May. 'From your style of speech any one would take you for an octogenarian, or some venerable granddame,—a sort of comfortable person, such as one likes to see seated in a chimney corner.'

And she laughed merrily as the contrasting graceful figure of Helen passed out of the room.

The next morning, before Reginald started for the north Helen and he were going out for a ride, and the former asked May to join them, adding, by way of inducement, that Captain Drummond was coming over to accompany them; but May made so decided an objection, that Helen, feeling she should vex her by importunity, accepted her reply as conclusive.

When they were about to start, May went to the window: she liked to see Reginald and Helen together, they were so well matched; and as she was watching them with interest, her eye caught Vero's, and he raised his hat, and gave a look of regret that she was going to stay behind. Returning one of her characteristic nods, she went back to the table to try to prepare something for Mr. Harrington; but she felt restless, and found it difficult to chain her thoughts to the subject on which she was professedly engaged.

The equestrians returned as they went. Vero was going to accompany his friend part of the way on his journey, so that they were all to be present at luncheon. May and Vero happened to be alone for a few minutes before the rest of the party joined them, and things happened in this wise:

Vero expressed his disappointment at her not having made one of the riding party, adding that he had proposed coming to plead for her company on his own behalf; but that, as Miss Douglas assured him she had quite decided on staying at home, he had hesitated.

'I am glad you did,' said May, shortly, 'for I never like to be persuaded into doing what I make up my mind not to do.'

She did not speak at all in her usual way, for being under the impression that Vero had transferred his affections thus speedily from Helen to herself, she was mortified both upon Helen's account and her own.

'I would rather encounter flying fids and bursting mortars than the face of a friend who feels me to be an intruder,' returned Vero, colouring deeply.

His expression was less severe than his words, and he looked as if hoping for a palliative to her cruel remark; but the voices of Margaret and Robert Lee were heard in the hall, when, with an exclamation of satisfaction, May left him to go and give them a welcome.

Vero soon followed, and lifting his hat as he left the house, said that he should see Reginald at the railway station.

Had he known how closely Robert followed on his footsteps, he might have been saved feelings of which he was heartily ashamed; for though shrinking from the fact as dishonouring to his self-esteem, Vero was obliged to acknowledge to himself that he was jealous of Robert, and as he proved the truth of the saying that jealousy is only another name for hatred, he at once sought a corrective for his unjust thoughts. To hate Robert Lee was to hate what was excellent and lovable! And what if Robert did entertain an affectionate regard for May? What was more natural? For his satisfaction he remembered that he

might do so without ever having a thought of appropriating her; which, from the knowledge he had of his friend, he judged most likely to be the case. He thought Robert would regard May as a sort of divinity entirely beyond his sphere.

Helen's first love-letter arrived a few days after Reginald's departure; and unfortunately for her composure, it came during breakfast-time. Feeling herself to be a mark for observation, she opened it in a matter-of-course way, and gave a summary of its contents, although she would have much preferred to reserve it for her own private perusal.

'Your brother thinks he will be able to help Pierre Moreau to employment,' she said, addressing May. 'He talks of coming up to see Captain Drummond off. 'Did you know he was going away again so soon?'

'He said to me, the day before yesterday, that he felt playing shirk,' returned Lord Agramont; 'but it must have been only during the last twenty-four hours that he has resolved on declaring himself fit for service.'

'I saw his mother for a few minutes yesterday,' said Lady Agramont. 'I had not an opportunity of speaking to her alone, but she seemed quite unlike herself,—so entirely out of spirits. The sisters will feel the parting very keenly,—they are enthusiastic in their love for their brother.'

'It is to-morrow Captain Bosanquet is coming up. It seems as if he were thinking of starting at once,' interposed Helen. 'I have been wondering that we have not seen him lately.'

And she looked towards May, and found May's gaze fixed on her.

Helen had lately received her impression of Vero's character from Reginald, and her esteem for it had increased in proportion to her knowledge of it. She felt his absence would be a

great loss to them; but as May did not respond to her freely-expressed regret, nothing more was then said on the subject.

Reginald appeared on the evening of the next day, and the home group at the abbey was suggestive of a striking picture of fireside felicity, when Vero Drummond appeared on the scene. Helen, who was in happy spirits, enjoying the sweet consciousness that the one she loved belonged more especially to her than to any one else present, was unusually cordial in her greeting; but May, for the first time in her life, felt ill at ease,—disagreeably conscious of her looks and movements, and contented herself with returning the bow he gave to the room generally. She would have been glad to have shaken hands with him warmly, if it were only in requital of his kindness to her brother, but some conflicting impulse prevented her acting reasonably.

'Are you really off again?' asked Lord Agramont. 'I think you might have fairly taken a longer holiday. We shall all be very sorry to part with you.'

Helen thought that Vero gave a quick glance at May, as if he would have liked to have read her expression, to see how far it confirmed her guardian's assertion.

'Do sit down,' said Lady Agramont, puzzled at a manner Helen had read more clearly. 'Mrs. Drummond is well, I hope?'

'I am afraid she is just now suffering on my account,' replied Vero. 'These leave-takings are far worse to stand than a fire of grape-shot.'

'I did hope you would have felt at liberty to have remained at home,' returned Lady Agramont, affectionately.

'You will agree with me that it is time my name should be erased from the sick-list,' he said, smiling, conscious that he was

looking very unlike an invalid. And he commenced to shake hands by way of farewell.

'May! Captain Drummond must leave us!' said Lady Agramont to her daughter, who appeared to have found something to interest her in a remote part of the room.

She came quickly forward, and extending her hand, wished Vero a pleasant voyage. Her manner struck all present as unnaturally cool; and Vero deprecated it by taking her hand a second time, with a look of remonstrance at her want of cordiality.

'I shall not return to the abbey to-night,' said Reginald, rising to accompany his friend; and with a *sotto voce* farewell to Helen, he left the room.

May sat absorbed in a book, apparently quite unaffected by Vero's manner. She did not even join in the expressions of regret and kindness that were being uttered around her; and after a time she left the room.

CHAPTER XXXII.

'Trip no farther, pretty sweeting!
Journeys end in lovers meeting,
Every wise man's son doth know.'

THE deep tones of the abbey turret clock had given the summons to the servants to assemble for evening prayer, and a goodly array of men and maids stood in file awaiting the entrance of the heads of the household.

Presently came the soft rustle of a silk dress, and in walked Lady Agramont leaning on her husband's arm, followed only by Helen and Frances.

'Where is May?' whispered Lady Agramont.

'She is not quite well, and has gone to her room,' said Helen. Then observing a look of anxiety on the face of her interrogator, she added, reassuringly, 'I do not think there is the slightest cause for alarm.'

After prayers, Lady Agramont went at once to her daughter's room, and seeing no light, concluded, as was the case, that she had gone to bed. May did not speak when she entered. She walked up to the bed, and as the moon shone into the room she watched for awhile the expression of her face, then stooped and kissed her.

'Dear mamma, what brought you here?' asked May, rousing herself.

'A wish to ascertain the cause of your retiring so early. What ails you, my darling?'

'I was just lazy because my head ached a very little,' said May. 'I feel I have brought you here under false pretences; but as you have come, give me a kiss.' And she raised herself, and throwing her arms round her mother's neck, kissed her long and emphatically. 'You will say good night to Lord Agramont for me?' she added, and then settled herself as if to sleep.

But in some states of mind it is one thing to settle oneself as if to sleep, and another to fall sweetly into the arms of Morpheus; and such was May's experience that night. A slight dull pain about her heart kept her awake, and the next morning she went down to breakfast feeling spiritless and unrefreshed.

'You look below *par*, as if you wanted bracing,' said Lord Agramont, taking hold of both her hands, and holding her before him.

'She is a little feverish,' observed her mother.

'Then as fever generally confines itself to the lowlands, and malaria does not rise above a certain level, the very best thing I can do, will be to go up to the hill, and to leave all exciting causes behind,' replied May, hilariously. 'We were reading yesterday, that a Professor Walker set water boiling with six degrees of heat less on a mountain than he found necessary for the purpose on a plain. It is to be hoped that the effect on me will be as stimulating. Of course my presence there will be a boon to Reginald,' she added, playfully.

After a little demur on the score of her health, and May's assurance that she was, in fact, quite well, no one made further objection to her proposition, and a few hours afterwards she was

at the Warren. Before going up to the house, she rode for awhile about the grounds, and caught sight of her brother entering one of the log houses that crowned the hill.

Unable to look in upon him there, without dismounting, on account of the steepness of the descent, she smacked her whip, and brought him out to speak to her.

'I 've fled to the hill to avoid persecution,' she said, merrily. 'They have been trying to persuade me that I am not well, and as I do not like to excite pity under false pretences, I 've come here for refuge.'

'I hope you will feel more at home than I do,' said Reginald, pleased to see her. 'I am feeling very much as if I had no right here.'

'But you have every right,' returned May, assuringly. 'Sir Lionel knew what he was doing; and it was much more sensible to divide his property between us, than that only one should reap the benefit of it. I do not exactly appreciate the amount of my riches, but I suppose I have enough to satisfy any reasonable wants. If Scotswood were indisputably at my disposal, I should choose to give it you. You will not doubt my sincerity?' she asked, winningly. 'And what could be more to my taste than to see Helen here as mistress? There is only one little regret I feel on that point. Did it never occur to you that Captain Drummond had an especial liking for her?'

Reginald seemed to have a call to a distance, for he suddenly left her, and, to her utter amazement, Vero (who had been sitting with her brother in the log house, the interior of which she could not see from where she stood,) appeared in his place.

After some sort of apology for having unintentionally overheard the conversation, he was silent for a moment, as if to

gather strength; and then, in a few weighty words, made his hopes and wishes known.

Horseback is not a convenient place under such circumstances, and Vero probably discovered it, for he at once helped her to dismount, and led her into the log house.

There he became more explicit; said something about being humbled as a marksman, if he had not succeeded in making it appear at which bird he had been aiming; explained his obliviousness to Helen's charms by reminding May of there being a root so sweet as to spoil the palate for tasting even sugar—of the sun's being so dazzling as to damage the sight for seeing other objects—or, at all events, indulging in comparisons which, in a more philosophical mood, he would have voted as muffism and moonshine. He told her that he had thought of her with interest from the time when he used to see her, a little fairy thing, on the hunting-field, long before the time when he sent her the bunch of white flowers, on the evening of the ball at the abbey; thus proving demonstrably that his affection for her was no new thing.

Although not objecting to the devotion and enthusiasm his manner evinced, she did not grant him any sign that his suit was accepted; and feeling somewhat nonplussed, he coaxed her into sitting down.

Argus placed himself before them, and sat champing his jowl, as if he thought love-making the most savoury thing in the world. There was a benignant, gratified expression in the creature's fine eye as he watched proceedings; and after a time he laid a paw on each in solemn fashion, as if he were a priest, and ready to perform the marriage ceremony for them at once.

'He gives his sanction; good dog!' said Vero, caressing and fondling the beast, in token of his appreciation of his good

wishes; but the proceedings seemed less to May's taste, for she rose quickly, under pretext of looking after Daylight.

Vero induced her, however, to ride back with him to the abbey, and it may be concluded, that on their way thither they came to some satisfactory understanding, for on their arrival Vero looked very bright and happy, and asked for Lord Agramont.

From seeing him and May return together, the ladies had an instinct that something very pleasant had taken place; and later in the day Vero made his happiness known in a way that showed that he thought May's love well worth the winning.

The girls did not ask particulars, but Reginald afterwards informed his mother that, having seen how things stood, he had dissuaded Vero from offering himself to go out again, in order to give May an opportunity of learning her own mind before it was too late. His love for Helen had probably quickened his perception of love's symptoms.

After a few weeks' courting, May was not at all disinclined to put herself under Vero's tender and trusty care; and no wonder! for she felt herself being dealt with exactly as in her numberless romances, composed from childhood upwards, she had idealized her heroes as treating her heroines.

Though high-spirited and self-reliant, Vero's manner was courteous and chivalric enough, to satisfy even her conceits as to the deference of manner due from a gentleman to a lady; while his truthful, high-minded nature effectually secured him against anything approaching to flattery or sycophancy.

Mrs. Drummond's satisfaction was not to be mistaken. She had not only perceived how her son was affected towards May, but had felt very much interested in the success of his suit; and now that it had come off prosperously, she was quite ready to take May near to her heart. She would frequently visit the abbey, and

carry her away with her to the hall by force of arms. On one of these occasions the children were crowding about May, delighting in the prospect of having her for their own real sister, when Vero, feeling bound to defend her against what he considered an aggression upon her forbearance, desired them, in a voice that reminded them that he was a soldier, to go at once to the nursery until they were sent for. All immediately obeyed, but Freddy looked very much injured at the command; and Mrs. Drummond sat listening to the ready wit of the young lovers, and pronouncing May to be a most winning, engaging, fascinating little creature, when he again burst into the room, and exclaimed in the breathless, excited, important manner habitual to him,

'They had singled out a buck for fatting, and it ran clean through the herd, cleared the hedge, and jumped into the middle of the wide brook, where it stood at bay, butting, until the dogs sent it off. Just like you do to Vero, when he wants to kiss you,' he added, looking at May.

'Is that the way you speak to a lady, sir?' asked Vero, sternly, scarcely able to command his features.

'Well, it *is* keeping you at bay, isn't it?' persisted the young gentleman.

By way of apology for Master Freddy's thus venting his indignation at being forbidden May's presence, it is only fair to state that he had long ago decided on making her *his* wife.

Vero told him that the best thing he could do would be to take some Scotch snuff, and to go out shooting, and that perhaps he would be able to bring the refractory animal to book in that way. He intended the suggestion as a crusher to the child's self-importance; but Master Freddy, after looking at him for a moment as if it would be too much condescension to remark upon so absurd a proposition, replied boldly,

'I bet you've wasted no end of powder and shot, and used many a heavy piece of ordnance, without doing more good than I should do with your Scotch snuff.'

'Why, you look as a pouter pigeon looks when he swells out his crop,' said Vero, as Master Freddy was taking himself from the room with an expression on his face that made them laugh.

Mrs. Drummond called him to her, and said a word which appeared to be quieting in its effect, for he evidently went away somewhat mollified.

'He is a sharp little chap that,' said Vero, feeling children were sometimes very inconvenient.

All went on very smoothly for a time with both sets of lovers, but when it came to May being asked to fix a time for the wedding, she looked as if she had never thought of the thing in so practical a light, and intimated that she would rather leave that unsettled at present—that it would be time enough to think of marrying on some far-off day.

Vero importuned her on the subject, and she punished him, to say nothing of herself, by being out of the way the next time he paid her a visit, thus manifesting that she felt herself entitled to the sole voice in the matter. The day after this happened, Vero was called to London on business for a few days; and upon being made aware of the necessity for his absence, she took the news quite indifferently, as if it were not worth even a comment. So he departed, without a word comforting either to his self-love or to his love for her.

She was sitting lamenting her freakishness, and denouncing it as shilly-shallying and tiresome, when Helen joined her, and said brightly,

'The vacancy your brother spoke of for Pierre Moreau is as a superintendent in some department connected with the mining.

It seems to me just the thing for him. If he proves himself trustworthy, he will have an opportunity of improving his position. I do not think anything could have been found more suitable.'

'Reginald is sure to exercise good judgment in anything he undertakes,' returned May. 'There will be such a concentration of wisdom at Scotswood,—I am expecting to hear of no end of philanthropical schemes being propounded.'

Helen smiled at her raillery, and said, thoughtfully,

'It is a great thing to know where to seek wisdom.'

'I 'm glad you 've thought of Pierre,' remarked May, abruptly turning the conversation.

She had so great a dislike to anything like stereotyped phraseology, that the fear of being led into it often made her appear curt and *brusque;* moreover, she knew that such remarks as the one Helen had just made were sometimes intended to invite discussion, and she was more inclined to be quiet just then. In spite of this off-hand manner, the want of precision in her movements, and of any mathematically defined rule as to what is correct, which those require to satisfy them who can only recognize religion under one uniform garb, May thoroughly appreciated the golden rules by which Helen's life was then guided. Naturally acute at discerning the spirit that moves to action, she had asked herself why her friend's sentiments had become so much more generous? why she was so diligent in carrying out her plans? why so vigorous in the government of herself? It was evident to her that her actions were not the result of her own humour; and she talked it over with Frances, and Frances solved her riddle. From her she understood that Helen's motive of action was love to God—love of the pure and elevating principles by which He teaches His children to guide themselves, and an affectionate desire for His favour. She could

quite understand the vivifying, animating, rectifying effect of love; and although she was shy on the subject of religion, and would frequently chatter away on indifferent topics when she thought Helen was about to introduce it, yet at heart it had a growing attraction for her. On this occasion all conversation was prevented by the appearance of Alsie, who came to announce that M. Pierre had arrived, and that he wished to see the young ladies. She had changed her usual cap for a more fantastic combination of *tulle* and flowers, and looked a little anxious to avoid inspection.

Pierre was shown into the room, and, as Alsie had once before remarked, he *did* look a gentleman, to be sure.

The girls talked to him in a way which considerably strengthened his admiration for English girls, and then sent him under Alsie's care to the housekeeper's room for refreshment, saying that by the time he had rested, they hoped Lord Agramont would be in, that he might know if Reginald was still at Scotswood; if he were there, he could go to him at once.

Alsie gave Pierre a hearty welcome to England, said that she should never forget his kindness when she was in trouble in France, and showed unmistakably that she was glad to see him.

Pierre had, by way of introduction, brought a note from Dr. Milman, in which the doctor promised to be present at the wedding, and entered into Helen's prospects with fatherly interest. But it was not his way to finish a letter without a word of counsel, and he concluded by saying that he rejoiced that in her case intellectual and spiritual joys were added to those merely earthly; that, while hoping, so far as she was concerned, all clouds were hidden deep down below the horizon, he hoped also that she would remember that the calm must sometimes be broken—the

dark clouds arise; and that while her sky was bright, she would prepare herself for whatever might befall.

A word from her venerable friend was cheering to Helen, and she sat and talked happily about old times, until she thought Pierre had been kept too long waiting, and then went to inquire if Lord Agramont had returned, or was likely to return. As she crossed the hall, she saw him at some distance from the house, talking to Gertrude Drummond, who was on horseback. He held a letter in his hand, and the contents seemed to be of unusual interest; so that she did not like to intrude on him then, and returned to the room in which she had been sitting, until she thought he was likely to be at liberty.

After a time, May rose to go in search of her mamma, and Helen accompanied her, thinking thus to obtain the desired information; but Lady Agramont did not meet her in her usual bright way, and after saying that her husband was in his study, seemed at a loss for a subject on which to converse. Helen felt afraid that some anxiety or some grief was depressing her, and lingered in the hope of hearing particulars.

During the years of her separation from May, Lady Agramont had suffered many hours of self-reproach—in the first place for having consented to part with her child under any circumstances, and in the next for subjecting her to the control of one of Sir Lionel's feeble character, whose care and guardianship of her were likely to be uncertain and contingent, as had proved to be the case during the time of her isolation in France. She had prayed in deep humiliation that, as a token of forgiveness for what she now recognized as a perversion of trust, God would restore to her her child again; and since then her prayers had given place to thanksgiving. The words of the 103rd Psalm often rose spontaneously to her mind, as ex

pressive of her gratitude for her restored possession. A double portion of care seemed due to May from her, by way of payment of old scores. She watched her happiness very narrowly, and when she had found that, as far as earthly guardianship was concerned, it was likely to be in the keeping of Vero Drummond, she had fondly hoped that her child's past trials were to be more than balanced by future joys. And now she had learned that her probation was not yet complete. Gertrude Drummond had ridden over to communicate the intelligence that the Government was shipping off troops as quickly as possible,—that Vero, considering it a point of honour not to hold back, was going out again to the Crimea for the final struggle.

Mrs. Drummond had sent over to prepare May for her son's farewell visit, and Gertrude, not knowing how May would receive the news, had made Lord Agramont the medium of her communication.

How indeed would she receive it? When she and Helen entered the room, Lady Agramont tried to summon resolution to tell her, but the sight of May's sweet face seemed to render it impossible; and, writing a few words on an envelope, she closed it, and asked her to be the bearer of it to Lord Agramont; then turning to Helen, she put her in possession of her cause of trouble.

Helen's rising colour evidenced how vivid was her fellow-feeling. She knew that she might have been called upon to part thus with Reginald, and could well realize the pang of such a parting. Appreciating May's ardent and enthusiastic temperament, she felt that the news would be heart-breaking, and her pity went out towards her with yearning tenderness. Vero and May were such gay spirits, that any sudden reverse of fortune would fall on them crushingly: they had not yet learned the lesson so difficult to such natures,—to temper their elation.

How strikingly the wisdom of Dr. Milman's warning to her was illustrated in this case! She left the room, feeling that some preparation was necessary to enable her to meet May in the way that would be most acceptable to her; and after having been alone for some time, went down stairs again, and saw her and Vero standing together in the hall as if about to part. She would have retired, but as Vero held out his hand, she went forward.

'Take care of her for me,' he said, with feeling. 'I am glad that you are spared this!'

Helen had heard of several heart-rending parting scenes, but as she saw May's colourless face, and listened to Vero's auguries of a speedy return and a joyful reunion, his voice almost giving way in his effort to cheer her, she thought that few could be sadder than the one she witnessed. Vero did not linger; and as the door closed upon him, Helen, finding May needed support, led her away; then kissing her in a way she had never kissed her before, said,

'This will teach us to pray!'

Under almost all circumstances it would have been natural for May to rebel at this application of the pronoun; but Helen's sympathy was so rich and rare, so well worth having—her genuine heart-love was given to so few; and the oneness of sympathy and oneness of sorrow conveyed by her in that little sentence was far from unwelcome.

'I would not have him stay—it is right that he should go,' was May's choking reply.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

'But such a sacred and home-felt delight.
Such sober certainty of waking bliss,
I never felt till now.'

'THE treaty is signed at last!' said Lord Agramont, as he glanced over the 'Times' on the morning of the 20th of June, 1857. 'The next thing we may expect to hear is the evacuation of the Crimea by our troops.'

May looked up. Lord Agramont handed her the paper, and leaving her to resolve the consequences of the fact he had communicated, crossed the room, and stood at the window in colloquy with Lady Agramont.

May did not understand the change in her own prospects involved in the intelligence, until a congratulatory kiss from Helen quickened her perception, and called forth a bright smile of inquiry. As the probability of Vero's immediate return flashed itself on her mind, tears of joy filled her eyes, and Lord Agramont said rallyingly,

'It does not follow as a matter of course that he will be here before he is wanted: he may take it into his head to go and have a look at the deserted city.'

Lady Agramont gave a look of sympathy at her daughter, and Frances crept silently up to her friend, her eyes reflecting her tears.

The business of the day did not leave much time for thought. Mrs. Drummond drove over very early; Margaret Lee called during the morning; and ordinary matters fully filled up the time until evening.

After dinner the three girls placed themselves in the bay of the drawing-room to watch the return of the carriage that had gone to bring Miss Aberley from the railway station; when May said, thoughtfully,

'How little we see of Margaret Lee now! I do not think she would have come to-day, except to express her sympathy in what she knew would give us pleasure.'

'I dare say she feels that we are all too much occupied to care for her visits,' returned Frances; 'she always goes where she can be of use, or where she knows she is wanted.

'Is it that you do not go to her?' suggested Lady Agramont. 'You must do your part if you wish to preserve her friendship; we none of us like to be mere recipients, but expect to take our turn in administering.'

'"He shall lend to thee, and thou shalt not lend to him," was one of the curses,' interposed Lord Agramont, smiling.

'Friendships never run smoothly in uneven channels,' remarked Helen, who was naturally conservative in her notions, and had not sufficient interest in Margaret to make an excep, tion in her case. 'When people are conscious of being in society above that to which they are generally admitted, they do not feel at ease, and their uneasiness communicates itself to those about them.'

'Margaret Lee's manner is not uneasy,' said May.

'I do not think she is as much at home with Helen as with us,' interposed Frances.

'I should think Miss Lee is a character to be "satisfied with herself,"' said Lord Agramont, meditatively.

'I believe they alone are the happy people who can be quite independent of the countenance of those above them in social relations,' returned Lady Agramont; adding, thoughtfully, 'the rich are frequently fenced in with their gold, and the poor with their pride, and thus barriers are formed which act as obstacles to free intercourse even among those best fitted to enjoy fellowship.'

'Money is a corruption if allowed to interfere with the friendly relations of those whose moral and intellectual *status* fit them for each other's society,' returned Lord Agramont: 'and while we are obliged to confess that there is a great deal of corrupt coin afloat in society, as individuals, let us take care not to circulate it.'

Helen felt he meant a slight rebuke to her, and was silent, asking herself if in her welcome to Margaret she had been deficient in that *suaviter in modo* which alone could make it a welcome.

'How we used to like to go to Mr. Lee's when we were children!' said Frances, musingly. 'Do you remember the games he used to invent to make us laugh, and the delightful rides Mr. Robert used to give us round the meadows?' she asked, looking at her sister.

'They were always very kind,' was the quiet reply.

'Then it is evident we are all their debtors,' said May. 'I used to stop Daylight before the window of the room in which I supposed old Mr. Lee to be sitting, in the hope of bringing him to the window. I did so like his kind face.'

'He is one of the most unselfish men I ever knew,' said Lord Agramont, 'although he's a martyr to gout.'

'I propose that we go and call upon him to-morrow,' said May. 'We will tell him all about ourselves—our prospects, I mean.'

'Don't forget it,' said Lord Agramont: 'he will appreciate the confidence.'

'And I shall appreciate his blessing,' said May. 'He has such a real way of saying "God bless you!"'

'I should think people must have felt enriched by those old patriarchs saying to them in the solemn voice in which I fancy they used to speak, "May the Lord God of your fathers bless you!"' said Frances.

Lord and Lady Agramont exchanged smiles, and sat contemplating the group of girls with unmingled pleasure. The clear light of the summer evening, and the gauzy texture of their dresses, softened their beauty, which was sufficient to have fascinated an artist; and those more deeply interested in them could read their characters and still be pleased. Frances soon destroyed the picture by jumping up and hurrying from the room, exclaiming, 'There's the carriage!'

Helen followed more deliberately, and May kept a little in the background; but all were in the hall to welcome Miss Aberley, the heads of the family not excepted.

Frances hung on the arm of her old friend, May relieved her of her reticule, and Helen followed with them up stairs.

The evening passed pleasantly,—the conversation was very animated, and when Miss Aberley retired for the night Helen claimed to accompany her.

'I am so glad you will settle near us,' she said as she was about to leave her. 'I have been wishing to congratulate you.'

'It is very kind of you to say so,' returned Miss Aberley, 'but I hardly feel to merit so much affection.' And, retaining the hand Helen had offered, she added, 'I, too, must congratulate you. Much as I rejoiced on learning from your letter that you had discovered a more winning motive for right-doing than the one I taught you, it was very humbling to me to feel that God had to select another agent to make known to you what it should have been my first ambition to teach.'

Helen coloured. She knew to what her friend alluded, and did not like to receive anything like a confession from one to whom she had been in the habit of deferring; but Miss Aberley continued,

'My wish to do well by you was sincere, but not having been taught myself, I was not able to teach you. I knew nothing of the sufficiency of Gospel motive to induce us to act as in God's sight, moment by moment, with a single desire to please Him. It was Mr. Harrington who opened my eyes to the truth of things. He was not satisfied at my proposing that you should go to Paris; he considered that, by doing so, I was exposing you to temptations for which you might be unprepared, and endeavoured to bring the charge home to my conscience.'

'How kindly he has always interested himself in us!' remarked Helen.

'He has been most interested in you,' returned Miss Aberley; 'and as he thinks far more of the welfare of the soul than of the body, he considered my judgment decidedly at fault.'

'If you erred in judgment, God has brought good out of evil,' suggested Helen. 'We have to thank you for very much.'

And with a warm 'good night' they parted.

As soon as the greatest facilities in locomotion could bring Vero home, he was again at Croyland. When May first heard

his rich, cheery voice in the hall, for a moment she felt very much inclined to retire into the background; but, after allowing a little time for the indulgence of such anomalous feelings as seem peculiar to lovers, Vero had every reason to be satisfied with his welcome. She was more tractable than he had ever before seen her, and it was manifest that the prospect of a long absence had worked in his favour.

'Well, May, when shall be the happy day?' he asked, shortly after his return. 'Here am I, with my arm and heart all yours, for a word—a look, won't do in this case.'

'We cannot be married without Reginald being present,' she returned; 'and he and Helen will not be home for a long time.'

'What is to prevent us both receiving our good things on the same day?' he asked.

'It would be such eccentric work,' returned May, 'so unnatural for me to have to think of myself, just as I ought to have my heart at leisure to think for Helen. You don't know all the love I owe her.'

'Your reason for gratitude weighs also on me,' said Vero; 'but I do not intend you to have your heart at leisure for any one but myself at present. We need not trouble ourselves about the day of the wedding; let us rather think of the bright vista beyond. Leave that part of the arrangement to me. There is nothing for it but that either we be married first, in which case Miss Douglas won't have you at all, or that both you and she be married on the same day—then she will have as much of you as you have to spare.'

And, to put an end to an unprofitable argument, he drew her arm through his and marched her away for a walk, as if his right of control had already begun.

May liked him all the better for his decision, and made no

resistance, not only allowing herself to be dealt with thus unceremoniously, but yielding to his proposition that they should go and look at the house Mr. Drummond had proposed as one suitable for their occupation.

In the evening arrangements were more fully discussed, and all united in urging that the marriages should take place on the same day; and so it was settled.

During the time of preparation there was a very merry party at the abbey. The Drummonds were there a great deal; Annie Milman was staying in the house; and Margaret was pressed into the service, under pretext of her advice and assistance being indispensable. The spirits of Vero and Reginald were at their brightest, and the conversation was what May was pleased to call 'highly spiced.'

When Lady Agramont asked her daughter to give such directions as she thought necessary as to her *trousseau*, the reply was characteristic:

'Don't let me have to push on my bonnet with my shoulders, and don't let them give me more sail than I can carry.'

These were her *restrictions:* she was content to leave *directions* to her mamma.

The great interest of the proceedings was in preparing a room for Dr. Milman. All were concordant in their love for him, and all took a spirited part in the proceedings. He had promised to stay six weeks at the abbey, and they felt that to make him comfortable for so long, they must have regard to something more than the chairs and tables in his room. They were in the thick of the action—Helen selecting books wherewith to fill his book-case, and Frances taking care that his chair should be of a comfortable height for his writing-table, and that he should have an inkstand out of which he could dip his ink easily—when

May remarked, 'You are as neatly good in such little arrangements as these as you are in everything else. I am quite behind in delicate attentions. I wonder if Dr. Milman is as fond of tea as Dr. Johnson was? If he is, I might construct one of those helmet-like curiosities of silk and wadding to keep his tea-pot warm.'

'He would mistake it for a kind of Napoleonic head-gear,' said Helen, laughing, 'and set it aside as too heating to his brain.'

When the doctor arrived and was shown by the girls to the apartments made ready for his reception, he declared that they had a design upon him, that if he took possession and sat down in them he should assuredly become a fixture, and that then there would be a difficulty as to his removal. Frances was especially delighted, and during his stay served him with something of Abigail's spirit, when she said, 'Behold, let thine handmaid be a servant to wash the feet of the servants of the Lord;' and it was a great treat to Helen to have him there acting as chaplain, and to see Reginald and he enjoy many walks and talks together.

Only old friends received invitations to the marriages. The party consisted of the Drummonds, Admiral and Miss Wyninto, Miss Aberley, the Lees, a few officers, friends of Reginald and Vero, and two or three others. Dr. Milman and Mr. Harrington were the officiating clergymen.

Details may be excused, for as the interest in such occasions centres in the bride and bridegroom, and as they have been well introduced, it may be readily imagined that the weddings were in all respects satisfactory. May did not even object to have her path strewed with flowers, since the children of the tenantry voluntarily gave attention to the service, although she had once

laughingly compared the custom to that of the Pope's guard making the people do homage at the sword's point.

The admiral entirely forgot his gout for that day. He was evidently well pleased with his nephew's bride, and presented her with a yacht as a marriage gift.

His great difficulty was as to what name he should give it. He had thought of the 'Coquette,' but he only liked 'Coquettes' in songs; then of the 'Fairy,' but the Queen had a 'Fairy,' and she had a right to be exclusive. 'Sun-bird' or 'Mayflower' were both significant, but neither of them original; and although he was not the Queen, he, too, liked something distinctive. At last he suggested that the christening could afford to wait; but at this proposal there was a general outcry, and he acknowledged himself to be fairly puzzled.

'Let it be the "Admiral,"' said May, who was not up in ship nomenclature, and suggested it from a feeling of gratitude to her indulgent old friend. 'You are "the admiral" to me,' she said, 'the only one I have ever known; and it will do very nicely.'

The old gentleman was perceptibly gratified, and as there was not a dissenting voice to May's proposition, the 'Admiral' was the name of May's yacht; not a very suitable one, it must be confessed; but it is not only yachts that have inappropriate names, and we must take things as they are.

Aunt Jane warmed up wonderfully upon the occasion. She liked May's pretty simple way of accepting her brother's gift, and announced her intention of allowing her nephew a sufficient income to defray the yacht's expenses; adding, that he might consider himself entirely reinstated in her favour, and, as she had always intended, heir to her property.

This was a very satisfactory declaration; but Vero, having

interests of greater moment to which to attend, had little time to appreciate it on that day.

* * * * * * *

Two years being supposed to have passed, we will take one more look at our friends. Frances is still at the abbey, and is regarded by Lord and Lady Agramont as a beloved daughter. There was an amicable dispute as to which of the three homes should claim her; but it was decided that Lord Agramont's wish for her at the abbey made that place her post of duty.

Helen is installed as mistress of Scotswood, and pronounced by all who know her to be a fitting mistress for the place. Reginald and she work in perfect harmony, and are proving a blessing to the neighbourhood in which they reside, carrying into the world the pure and elevating sentiments by which their own conduct is regulated. The spiritual needs of the people have been so much neglected that they sometimes feel their work Herculean; but anything that is too hard for them they 'set before the Lord;' and as we have a promise that the righteous shall hold on in his way, and 'he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger,' there is good reason for believing they will persevere, even under difficulties. They know well how to enjoy wealth, and make use of it to enlarge their utility, never forgetting the portion that belongs of right to 'the fatherless and the stranger;' taking care that, at harvest-time, olive beating, and grape gathering, the poor have a liberal gleaning.

Sometimes May has thought that if she were Helen she should be a little more demonstrative in her approval of Reginald's generous plans and high resolves; but even she confessed they were a match, and that they went admirably together.

Now for a glimpse at May's home, and the story shall come to a close.

It is one of those sweet exhilarating spring days, on which one feels it a duty to be happy! Recent showers have made everything of a lovely green, and the soft velvety turf throws up the brilliant colours of the American plants to perfection. The sky is of a delicious blue, only flecked here and there with light clouds; and altogether it is just such a day as would awake new life in one who had been weakened either in body or mind.

Vincent, who, upon informing May that he did not feel no ways above work, but would be more at home at the head of her kitchen establishment than settling down in a small house of his own, had taken up his abode with her, and he was arranging the blinds, in preparation for her coming down stairs, and had just drawn up a couch in order that she might get a good view of the lawn, when Vero led his young wife into the room.

'How lovely it all looks!' she exclaimed, appreciatively. 'Now you must go for a ride; but I should like you just to see baby first,' she added, winningly. And she rang the bell, and desired that baby might be brought.

Accordingly a woman, quaker-like in her appointments, the *beau ideal* of such a nurse as a particular young mother might be expected to select for her babe, soon made her appearance, carrying the precious bundle; and after talking to nurse confidentially, in a responsible, motherly way that exceedingly amused Vero, May took the treasure in her arms, and, carefully arranging flannel and cockade, called to Vero to come and look at him.

Her face beamed with joy and eagerness; and Vero, to satisfy her, had wound up his enthusiasm to the culminating point,

when Master Baby opened his mouth at full stretch, and worked his face about in a way which caused Vero, who was ignorant of what was necessary for the proper exercise of baby muscles, to inquire if there were anything wrong with him.

By this time the young gentleman was screaming lustily, and May, much disappointed that he should not appear to advantage, said to him, coaxingly,

'I thought you were a fine fellow, and you are a little impostor; papa will think that I am ill-using you. Vero Lionel! you make me quite ashamed of such a pretentious name. I shall have to go to Helen for a lesson in baby discipline.'

And as the little features subsided into calm, Vero left the room. He soon returned, however, and putting a case of pearl ornaments by May's side, said that the jeweller had dilated upon points of perfection in them that he could better appreciate in his own pearl—their roundness, and smoothness, and weight; although he must confess that the weight could only apply as to character; upon which May regarded him with great beauty of expression, and called out to him as he left the room,

'Vero, think what I can do by way of a thank offering for all this happiness.'

THE END.

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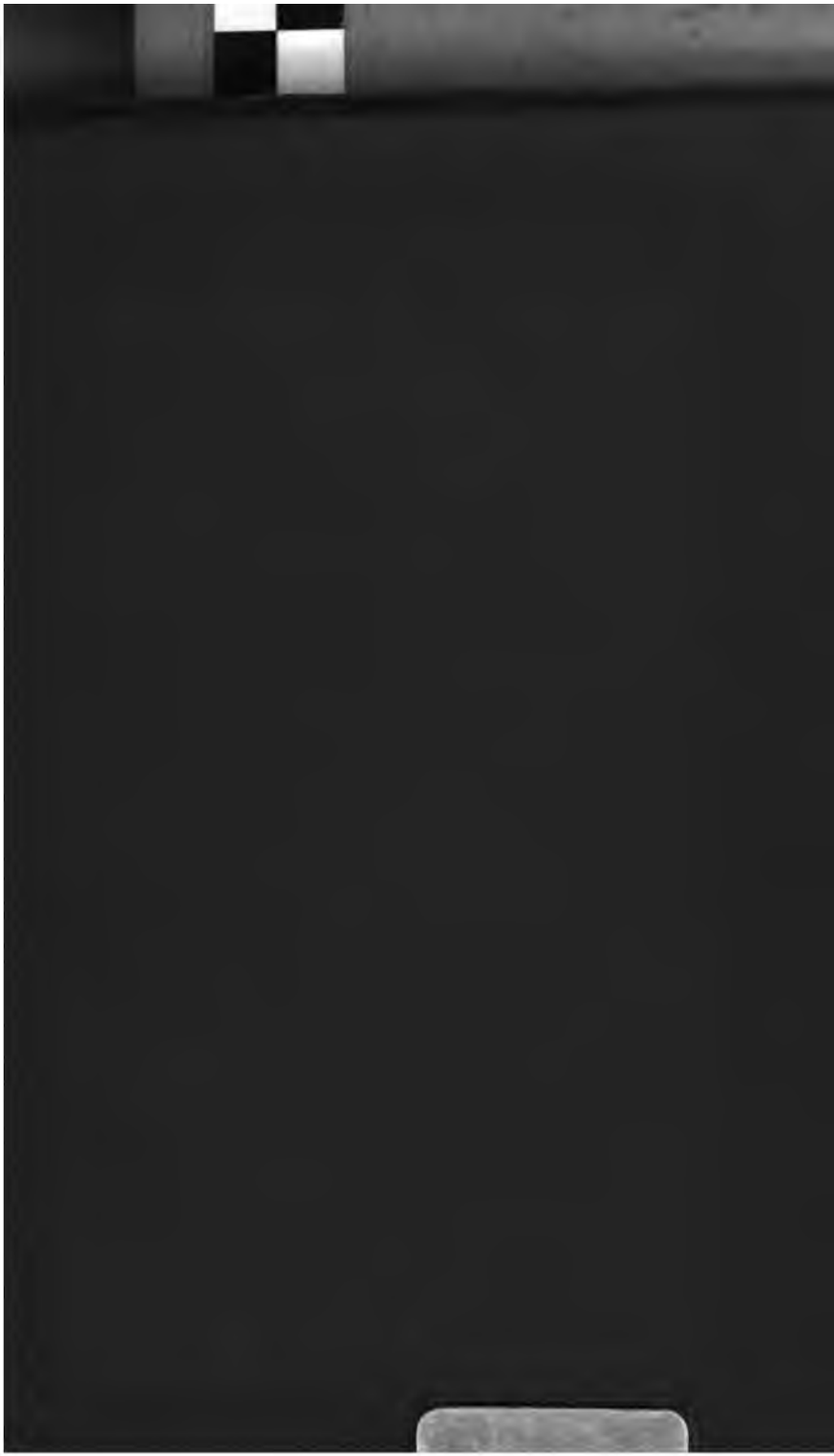
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